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HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

H. A. TAINE

TRANSLATED BY

H. VAN LAUN

ONE OF THE MASTERS AT THE EDINBURGH ACADEMY

With a Preface Prepared Expressly for this Translation by the Author

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE translator has collated almost every passage mentioned by M. Taine, verified every quotation, and spared no pains to render this history of English literature worthy of its author and of its subject. A copious Index will be found at the end of the Second Volume.

H. VAN LAUN.

October, 1871.

THE ACADEMY, EDINBURGH.

Mr. van Laun is not responsible for the English rendering of the Author's Introduction.

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DEDICATION.

EVEN at the present day, the historian of Civilisation in Europe and in France is amongst us, at the head of those historical studies which he formerly encouraged so much. I myself have experienced his kindness, learned by his conversation, consulted his books, and profited by that intellectual and impartial breadth, that active and liberal sympathy, with which he receives the labours and thoughts of others, even when these ideas are not like his own. I consider it a duty and an honour to inscribe this work to M. Guizot.

H. A. TAINE.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION, ... 1

BOOK I.—THE SOURCE.

CHAP. I.—THE SAXONS, ... 32

II.—THE NORMANS, ... 53

III.—THE NEW TONGUE, ... 105

BOOK II.—THE RENAISSANCE.

CHAP. I.—THE PAGAN RENAISSANCE, ... 141

II.—THE THEATRE, ... 223

III.—BEN JONSON, ... 267

IV.—SHAKSPEARE, ... 296

V.—THE CHRISTIAN RENAISSANCE, ... 352

VI.—MILTON, ... 409

BOOK III.—THE CLASSIC AGE.

CHAP. I.—THE RESTORATION, ... 457

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THIS TRANSLATION

THE Author of this elegant and faithful translation has thought that I ought to indicate to the reader what plan I kept before me in writing the history of English Literature. Briefly stated, it was this:

A nation lives twenty, thirty centuries and longer, and a man lives but sixty or seventy years. Nevertheless, a nation has a good many points in which it is like a man. For, in a career so long and almost interminable, a nation has its own character, both mental and moral, which manifests itself at the beginning, and develops from epoch to epoch, preserving the same fundamental qualities from its origin to its decline. This is a matter of experience, and whoever has followed the history of a people—for instance, of the Greeks from Homer to the Byzantine Cæsars, the Germans from the Nibelungen Lied to Goethe, the French from the first *Chansons de Geste* and the earliest *fabliaux*, down to Beranger and Alfred de Musset, cannot help recognizing in the life of a nation a continuity as strict as in the life of an individual.

Now suppose that in the case of one of the half-dozen great men who have played the leading parts on the world's stage—Alexander, Napoleon, Newton, Dante,—suppose that by some extraordinary piece of good fortune we happened to have a quantity of authentic portraits, uninjured and fresh—water-colors, drawings, sketches, full-length portraits, representing him at all times of life, in his various costumes, expressions, and attitudes, with all his surroundings, especially in his greatest deeds, and in the most trying crises that marked the development of his character.

Well, that is just the kind of memoranda which we possess

to-day to enable us to know the great being that we call a nation, especially when the nation has a full and original literature. For most essential purposes, each of its literary productions is a picture in which we contemplate the nation itself. And this picture is really more precious than a physical portrait, for it is a moral one. The poem of Beowulf and the Canterbury Tales, the dramatic works of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the various lines of authors in prose and verse who have followed each other, from Shakespeare and Bacon down to Tennyson, Dickens, and Carlyle, place before us all the literary forms and poetical images, all the variations of thought, sentiment, and expression, in which the soul of the English nation has found delight. There we may follow the change in tastes, and the persistency in instincts; there we see the national character acted upon by circumstances, and moulded in directions determined partly by its own nature and partly by tradition; but through all, one is conscious of a persistent individuality—the adult merely fulfills the promise of the youth and the child; the living figure of to-day still preserves the characteristic features of the earliest portrait. From all these portraits I have undertaken to pick out the most lifelike and the most faithful, to arrange them according to their dates and degrees of importance, to put them in appropriate groups and to explain them, commenting upon them with admiration and sympathy, but not without freedom and candor; for though one ought to feel affection for his theme, he should never flatter anybody. Possibly it would be better to leave my task to those who are at home in England; they are apt to say that they know our personage better because they are of his family. True, but in living with a person one is not specially apt to be aware of his peculiarities. On the contrary, a stranger has one advantage—custom does not blunt his perceptions; he is unconsciously struck by the principal characteristics, and treats the subject with reference to them. This, then, is my whole excuse; I offer it to the reader with some special confidence, because, when I pass in review my own ideas about France, I find many which have been given me by strangers, and by none more than the English.

H. A. TAINE.

PARIS, October, 1871.

INTRODUCTION.

> The historian might place himself for a certain time, during several centuries or amongst a certain people, in the midst of the spirit of humanity. He might study, describe, relate all the events, the changes, the revolutions which took place in the inner-man; and when he had reached the end, he would possess a history of the civilisation of the nation and the period he selected.—GUIZOT, *Civilisation in Europe*, p. 25.

HISTORY has been revolutionised, within a hundred years in Germany, within sixty years in France, and that by the study of their literatures.

It was perceived that a work of literature is not a mere play of imagination, a solitary caprice of a heated brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners, a type of a certain kind of mind. It was concluded that one might retrace, from the monuments of literature, the style of man's feelings and thoughts for centuries back. The attempt was made, and it succeeded.

Pondering on these modes of feeling and thought, men decided that in them were embalmed facts of the highest kind. They saw that these facts bore reference to the most important occurrences, that they explained and were explained by them, that it was necessary thenceforth to give them a rank, and a most important rank, in history. This rank they have received, and from that moment history has undergone a complete change: in its subject-matter, its system, its machinery, the appreciation of laws and of causes. It is this change, as it has happened and must still happen, that we shall here endeavour to exhibit.

I.

What is your first remark on turning over the great, stiff leaves of a folio, the yellow sheets of a manuscript,—a poem, a code of laws, a declaration of faith? This, you say, was not created alone. It is but a mould, like a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of those shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished. Under the shell there was an animal, and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell, except to represent to yourself the animal? So do you study the document only in order to know the man. The

shell and the document are lifeless wrecks, valuable only as a clue to the entire and living existence. We must reach back to this existence, endeavour to re-create it. It is a mistake to study the document, as if it were isolated. This were to treat things like a simple pedant, to fall into the error of the bibliomaniac. Behind all, we have neither mythology nor languages, but only men, who arrange words and imagery according to the necessities of their organs and the original bent of their intellects. A dogma is nothing in itself; look at the people who have made it,—a portrait, for instance, of the sixteenth century, the stern and energetic face of an English archbishop or martyr. Nothing exists except through some individual man; it is this individual with whom we must become acquainted. When we have established the parentage of dogmas, or the classification of poems, or the progress of constitutions, or the modification of idioms, we have only cleared the soil: genuine history is brought into existence only when the historian begins to unravel, across the lapse of time, the living man, toiling, impassioned, entrenched in his customs, with his voice and features, his gestures and his dress, distinct and complete as he from whom we have just parted in the street. Let us endeavour, then, to annihilate as far as possible this great interval of time, which prevents us from seeing man with our eyes, with the eyes of our head. What have we under the fair glazed pages of a modern poem? A modern poet, who has studied and travelled, a man like Alfred de Musset, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, or Heine, in a black coat and gloves, welcomed by the ladies, and making every evening his fifty bows and his score of bon-mots in society, reading the papers in the morning, lodging as a rule on the second floor; not over gay, because he has nerves, and especially because, in this dense democracy where we choke one another, the discredit of the dignities of office has exaggerated his pretensions while increasing his importance, and because the refinement of his feelings in general disposes him somewhat to believe himself a deity. This is what we take note of under modern meditations or sonnets. Even so, under a tragedy of the seventeenth century we have a poet, like Racine for instance, elegant, staid, a courtier, a fine speaker, with a majestic wig and ribboned shoes, at heart a royalist and a Christian, 'having received the grace of God not to blush in any company, Kings nor Gospellers;' clever at entertaining the prince, and rendering for him into good French the 'old French of Amyot;' very respectful to the great, always 'knowing his place;' as assiduous and reserved at Marly as at Versailles, amidst the regular pleasures of a polished and fastidious nature, amidst the salutations, graces, airs, and fopperies of the braided lords, who rose early in the morning to obtain the promise of being appointed to some office in case of the death of the present holder, and amongst charming ladies who count their genealogies on their fingers in order to obtain the right of sitting down in the presence of the King or Queen. On that head consult St. Simon and the

engravings of Pérelle, as for the present age you have consulted Balzac and the water-colours of Eugène Lami. Similarly, when we read a Greek tragedy, our first care should be to realise to ourselves the Greeks, that is, the men who live half naked, in the gymnasia, or in the public squares, under a glowing sky, face to face with the most noble landscapes, bent on making their bodies nimble and strong, on conversing, discussing, voting, carrying on patriotic piracies, but for the rest lazy and temperate, with three urns for their furniture, two anchovies in a jar of oil for their food, waited on by slaves, so as to give them leisure to cultivate their understanding and exercise their limbs, with no desire beyond that of having the most beautiful town, the most beautiful processions, the most beautiful ideas, the most beautiful men. On this subject, a statue such as the Meleager, or the Theseus of the Parthenon, or still more, the sight of the Mediterranean, blue and lustrous as a silken tunic, and islands arising from it like masses of marble, and added to these, twenty select phrases from Plato and Aristophanes, will teach you much more than a multitude of dissertations and commentaries. And so again, in order to understand an Indian Purāna, begin by imagining to yourself the father of a family, who, 'having seen a son on his son's knees,' retires, according to the law, into solitude, with an axe and a pitcher, under a banana tree, by the river-side, talks no more, adds fast to fast, dwells naked between four fires, and under a fifth, the terrible sun, devouring and renewing without end all things living; who step by step, for weeks at a time, fixes his imagination upon the feet of Brahma, next upon his knee, next upon his thigh, next upon his navel, and so on, until, beneath the strain of this intense meditation, hallucinations begin to appear, until all the forms of existence, mingled and transformed the one with the other, quaver before a sight dazzled and giddy, until the motionless man, catching in his breath, with fixed gaze, beholds the universe vanishing like a smoke beyond the universal and void Being into which he aspires to be absorbed. To this end a voyage to India would be the best instructor; or for want of better, the accounts of travellers, books of geography, botany, ethnology, will serve their turn. In each case the search must be the same. A language, a legislation, a catechism, is never more than an abstract thing: the complete thing is the man who acts, the man corporeal and visible, who eats, walks, fights, labours. Leave on one side the theory and the mechanism of constitutions, religions and their systems, and try to see men in their workshops, in their offices, in their fields, with their sky and earth, their houses, their dress, cultivations, meals, as you do when, landing in England or Italy, you remark faces and motions, roads and inns, a citizen taking his walk, a workman drinking. Our great care should be to supply as much as possible the want of present, personal, direct, and sensible observation which we can no longer practise; for it is the only means of knowing men. Let us make the past present: in order to judge of

a thing, it must be before us; there is no experience in respect of what is absent. Doubtless this reconstruction is always incomplete; it can produce only incomplete judgments; but to that we must resign ourselves. It is better to have an imperfect knowledge than a futile or false one; and there is no other means of acquainting ourselves approximately with the events of other days, than to *see* approximately the men of other days.

This is the first step in history: it was made in Europe at the new birth of imagination, toward the close of the last century, by Lessing, Walter Scott; a little later in France, by Chateaubriand, Augustin Thierry, Michelet, and others. And now for the second step.

II.

When you consider with your eyes the visible man, what do you look for? The man invisible. The words which enter your ears, the gestures, the motions of his head, the clothes he wears, visible acts and deeds of every kind, are expressions merely; somewhat is revealed beneath them, and that is a soul. An inner man is concealed beneath the outer man; the second does but reveal the first. You look at his house, furniture, dress; and that in order to discover in them the marks of his habits and tastes, the degree of his refinement or rusticity, his extravagance or his economy, his stupidity or his cunning. You listen to his conversation, and you note the inflexions of his voice, the changes in his attitudes; and that in order to judge of his intensity, his self-forgetfulness or his gaiety, his energy or his constraint. You consider his writings, his artistic productions, his business transactions or political ventures; and that in order to measure the scope and limits of his intelligence, his inventiveness, his coolness, to find out the order, the description, the general force of his ideas, the mode in which he thinks and resolves. All these externals are but avenues converging to a centre; you enter them simply in order to reach that centre; and that centre is the genuine man, I mean that mass of faculties and feelings which are produced by the inner man. We have reached a new world, which is infinite, because every action which we see involves an infinite association of reasonings, emotions, sensations new and old, which have served to bring it to light, and which, like great rocks deep-seated in the ground, find in it their end and their level. This underworld is a new subject-matter, proper to the historian. If his critical education suffice, he can lay bare, under every detail of architecture, every stroke in a picture, every phrase in a writing, the special sensation whence detail, stroke, or phrase had issue; he is present at the drama which was enacted in the soul of artist or writer; the choice of a word, the brevity or length of a sentence, the nature of a metaphor, the accent of a verse, the development of an argument—everything is a symbol to him; while his eyes read the text, his soul and mind pursue the continuous development and the everchanging succession of the emotions

and conceptions out of which the text has sprung: in short, he unveils a psychology. If you would observe this operation, consider the originator and model of contemporary culture, Goethe, who, before writing *Iphigenia*, employed day after day in designing the most finished statues, and who at last, his eyes filled with the noble forms of ancient scenery, his mind penetrated by the harmonious loveliness of antique life, succeeded in reproducing so exactly in himself the peculiarities of the Greek imagination, that he gives us almost the twin sister of the Antigone of Sophocles, and the goddesses of Phidias. This precise and proved interpretation of past sensations has given to history, in our days, a second birth; hardly anything of the sort was known to the preceding century. They thought men of every race and century were all but identical; the Greek, the barbarian, the Hindoo, the man of the Restoration, and the man of the eighteenth century, as if they had been turned out of a common mould; and all in conformity to a certain abstract conception, which served for the whole human race. They knew man, but not men; they had not penetrated to the soul; they had not seen the infinite diversity and marvellous complexity of souls; they did not know that the moral constitution of a people or an age is as particular and distinct as the physical structure of a family of plants or an order of animals. Now-a-days, history, like zoology, has found its anatomy; and whatever the branch of history to which you devote yourself, philology, linguistic lore, mythology, it is by these means you must strive to produce new fruit. Amid so many writers who, since the time of Herder, Ottfried Muller, and Goethe, have continued and still improve this great method, let the reader consider only two historians and two works, Carlyle's *Cromwell*, and Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal:* he will see with what justice, exactness, depth of insight, one may discover a soul beneath its actions and its works; how behind the old general, in place of a vulgar, hypocritical schemer, we recover a man travailing with the troubling reveries of a melancholic imagination, but with definite instincts and faculties, English to the core, strange and incomprehensible to one who has not studied the climate and the race; how, with about a hundred meagre letters and a score of mutilated speeches, one may follow him from his farm and team, to the general's tent and to the Protector's throne, in his transmutation and development, in his pricks of conscience and his political conclusions, until the machinery of his mind and actions becomes visible, and the inner tragedy, ever changing and renewed, which exercised this great, darkling soul, passes, like one of Shakspeare's, through the soul of the looker on. He will see (in the other case) how, behind the squabbles of the monastery, or the contumacies of nuns, one may find a great province of human psychology; how about fifty characters, that had been buried under the uniformity of a circumspect narrative, reappear in the light of day, each with its own specialty and its countless diversities; how, beneath theological disquisitions and monotonous sermons, one can

unearth the beatings of ever-living hearts, the convulsions and apathies of monastic life, the unforeseen reassertions and wavy turmoil of nature, the inroads of surrounding worldliness, the intermittent victories of grace, with such a variety of overcloudings, that the most exhaustive description and the most elastic style can hardly gather the inexhaustible harvest, which the critic has caused to spring up on this abandoned field. And so it is throughout. Germany, with its genius so pliant, so liberal, so apt for transformation, so well calculated to reproduce the most remote and anomalous conditions of human thought; England, with its intellect so precise, so well calculated to grapple closely with moral questions, to render them exact by figures, weights and measures, geography, statistics, by quotation and by common sense; France, with her Parisian culture, with her drawing-room manners, with her untiring analysis of characters and actions, her irony so ready to hit upon a weakness, her finesse so practised in the discrimination of shades of thought;—all have worked the same soil, and one begins to understand that there is no region of history where it is not imperative to till this deep level, if one would see a serviceable harvest rise between the furrows.

This is the second step; we are in a fair way to its completion. It is the proper work of the contemporary critic. No one has done it so justly and grandly as Sainte-Beuve: in this respect we are all his pupils; his method renews, in our days, in books, and even in newspapers, every kind of literary, of philosophical and religious criticism. From it we must set out in order to begin the further development. I have more than once endeavoured to indicate this development; there is here, in my mind, a new path open to history, and I will try to describe it more in detail.

III.

When you have observed and noted in man one, two, three, then a multitude of sensations, does this suffice, or does your knowledge appear complete? Is a book of observations a psychology? It is no psychology, and here as elsewhere the search for causes must come after the collection of facts. No matter if the facts be physical or moral, they all have their causes; there is a cause for ambition, for courage, for truth, as there is for digestion, for muscular movement, for animal heat. Vice and virtue are products, like vitriol and sugar; and every complex phenomenon has its springs from other more simple phenomena on which it hangs. Let us then seek the simple phenomena for moral qualities, as we seek them for physical qualities; and let us take the first fact that presents itself: for example, religious music, that of a Protestant Church. There is an inner cause which has turned the spirit of the faithful toward these grave and monotonous melodies, a cause broader than its effect; I mean the general idea of the true, external worship which man owes to God. It is this which has

modelled the architecture of the temple, thrown down the statues, removed the pictures, destroyed the ornaments, curtailed the ceremonies, shut up the worshippers in high pews, which prevent them from seeing anything, and regulated the thousand details of decoration, posture, and the general surroundings. This itself comes from another more general cause, the idea of human conduct in all its comprehensiveness, internal and external, prayers, actions, dispositions of every kind by which man is kept face to face with God; it is this which has enthroned doctrine and grace, lowered the clergy, transformed the sacraments, suppressed various practices, and changed religion from a discipline to a morality. This second idea in its turn depends upon a third still more general, that of moral perfection, such as is met with in the perfect God, the unerring judge, the stern watcher of souls, before whom every soul is sinful, worthy of punishment, incapable of virtue or salvation, except by the crisis of conscience which He provokes, and the renewal of heart which He produces. That is the master idea, which consists in erecting duty into an absolute king of human life, and in prostrating all ideal models before a moral model. Here we track the root of man; for to explain this conception it is necessary to consider race itself, that is, the German, the Northman, the structure of his character and intelligence, his general processes of thought and feeling, the sluggishness and coldness of sensation which prevent his falling easily and headlong under the sway of pleasure, the bluntness of his taste, the irregularity and revolutions of his conception, which arrest in him the birth of fair dispositions and harmonious forms, the disdain of appearances, the desire of truth, the attachment to bare and abstract ideas, which develop in him conscience, at the expense of all else. There the search is at an end; we have arrived at a primitive disposition, at a trait proper to all sensations, to all the conceptions of a century or a race, at a particularity inseparable from all the motions of his intellect and his heart. Here lie the grand causes, for they are the universal and permanent causes, present at every moment and in every case, everywhere and always acting, indestructible, and in the end infallibly supreme, since the accidents which thwart them, being limited and partial, end by yielding to the dull and incessant repetition of their force; in such a manner that the general structure of things, and the grand features of events, are their work; and religions, philosophies, poetries, industries, the framework of society and of families, are in fact only the imprints stamped by their seal.

IV.

There is then a system in human sentiments and ideas; and this system has for its motive power certain general traits, certain marks of the intellect and the heart common to men of one race, age, or country. As in mineralogy the crystals, however diverse, spring from certain simple physical forms, so in history, civilisations, however diverse, are

derived from certain simple spiritual forms. The one are explained by a primitive geometrical element, as the others are by a primitive psychological element. In order to master the classification of mineralogical systems, we must first consider a regular and general solid, its sides and angles, and observe in this the numberless transformations of which it is capable. So, if you would realise the system of historical varieties, consider first a human soul generally, with its two or three fundamental faculties, and in this compendium you will perceive the principal forms which it can present. After all, this kind of ideal picture, geometrical as well as psychological, is hardly complex, and one speedily sees the limits of the outline in which civilisations, like crystals, are constrained to exist.

What do we find, at first sight, in man? Images or representations of things, something, that is, which floats within him, exists for a time, is effaced, and returns again, after he has been looking upon a tree, an animal, any sensible object. This is the subject-matter, the development whereof is double, either speculative or practical, according as the representations resolve themselves into a *general conception* or an *active resolution*. Here we have the whole of man in an abridgment; and in this limited circle human diversities meet, sometimes in the womb of the primordial matter, sometimes in the twofold primordial development. However minute in their elements, they are enormous in the aggregate, and the least alteration in the factors produces vast alteration in the results. According as the representation is clear and as it were cut out by machinery or confused and faintly defined, according as it embraces a great or small number of the marks of the object, according as it is violent and accompanied by impulses, or quiet and surrounded by calm, all the operations and processes of the human machine are transformed. So, again, according as the ulterior development of the representation varies, the whole human development varies. If the general conception in which it results is a mere dry notation (in Chinese fashion), language becomes a sort of algebra, religion and poetry dwindle, philosophy is reduced to a kind of moral and practical common sense, science to a collection of formulas, classifications, utilitarian mnemonics, and the whole intellect takes a positive bent. If, on the contrary, the general representation in which the conception results is a poetical and figurative creation, a living symbol, as among the Aryan races, language becomes a sort of cloudy and coloured word-stage, in which every word is a person, poetry and religion assume a magnificent and inextinguishable grandeur, metaphysics are widely and subtly developed, without regard to positive applications; the whole intellect, in spite of the inevitable deviations and shortcomings of its effort, is smitten with the beautiful and the sublime, and conceives an ideal capable by its nobleness and its harmony of rallying round it the tenderness and enthusiasm of the human race. If, again, the general conception in which the representation results is poetical but not pre-

cise; if man arrives at it not by a continuous process, but by a quick intuition; if the original operation is not a regular development, but a violent explosion,—then, as with the Semitic races, metaphysics are absent, religion conceives God only as a king solitary and devouring, science cannot grow, the intellect is too rigid and complete to reproduce the delicate operations of nature, poetry can give birth only to vehement and grandiose exclamations, language cannot unfold the web of argument and of eloquence, man is reduced to a lyric enthusiasm, an unchecked passion, a fanatical and constrained action. In this interval between the particular representation and the universal conception are found the germs of the greatest human differences. Some races, as the classical, pass from the first to the second by a graduated scale of ideas, regularly arranged, and general by degrees; others, as the Germanic, traverse the same ground by leaps, without uniformity, after vague and prolonged groping. Some, like the Romans and English, halt at the first steps; others, like the Hindoos and Germans, mount to the last. If, again, after considering the passage from the representation to the idea, we consider that from the representation to the resolution, we find elementary differences of the like importance and the like order, according as the impression is sharp, as in southern climates, or dull, as in northern; according as it results in instant action, as among barbarians, or slowly, as in civilised nations; as it is capable or not of growth, inequality, persistence, and connections. The whole network of human passions, the chances of peace and public security, the sources of toil and action, spring from hence. Other primordial differences there are: their issues embrace an entire civilisation; and we may compare them to those algebraical formulas which, in a narrow limit, contain in advance the whole curve of which they form the law. Not that this law is always developed to its issue; there are perturbing forces; but when it is so, it is not that the law was false, but that its action was impeded. New elements become mingled with the old; great forces from without counteract the primitive. The race emigrates, like the Aryan, and the change of climate has altered in its case the whole economy, intelligence, and organisation of society. The people has been conquered, like the Saxon nation, and a new political structure has imposed on it customs, capacities, and inclinations which it had not. The nation has installed itself in the midst of a conquered people, downtrodden and threatening, like the ancient Spartans; and the necessity of living like troops in the field has violently distorted in an unique direction the whole moral and social constitution. In each case, the mechanism of human history is the same. One continually finds, as the original mainspring, some very general disposition of mind and soul, innate and appended by nature to the race, or acquired and produced by some circumstance acting upon the race. These mainsprings, once admitted, produce their effect gradually: I mean that after some centuries they bring the nation into a new condition, religious, literary,

social, economic; a new condition which, combined with their renewed effort, produces another condition, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, and so forth; so that we may regard the whole progress of each distinct civilisation as the effect of a permanent force which, at every stage, varies its operation by modifying the circumstances of its action.

V.

Three different sources contribute to produce this elementary moral state—the *race*, the *surroundings*, and the *epoch*. What we call the race are the innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him to the light, and which, as a rule, are united with the marked differences in the temperament and structure of the body. They vary with various peoples. There is a natural variety of men, as of oxen and horses, some brave and intelligent, some timid and dependent, some capable of superior conceptions and creations, some reduced to rudimentary ideas and inventions, some more specially fitted to special works, and gifted more richly with particular instincts, as we meet with species of dogs better favoured than others,—these for hunting, these for fighting, these for the chase, these again for house-dogs or shepherds' dogs. We have here a distinct force,—so distinct, that amidst the vast deviations which the other two motive forces produce in him, one can recognise it still; and a race, like the old Aryans, scattered from the Ganges as far as the Hebrides, settled in every clime, spread over every grade of civilisation, transformed by thirty centuries of revolutions, nevertheless manifests in its tongues, religions, literatures, philosophies, the community of blood and of intellect which to this day binds its offshoots together. Different as they are, their parentage is not obliterated; barbarism, culture and grafting, differences of sky and soil, fortunes good and bad, have laboured in vain: the great marks of the original model have remained, and we find again the two or three principal lineaments of the primitive imprint underneath the secondary imprints which time has stamped above them. There is nothing astonishing in this extraordinary tenacity. Although the vastness of the distance lets us but half perceive—and by a doubtful light—the origin of species,[1] the events of history sufficiently illumine the events anterior to history, to explain the almost immovable stedfastness of the primordial marks. When we meet with them, fifteen, twenty, thirty centuries before our era, in an Aryan, an Egyptian, a Chinese, they represent the work of several myriads of centuries. For as soon as an animal begins to exist, it has to reconcile itself with its surroundings; it breathes after a new fashion, renews itself, is differently affected according to the new changes in air, food, temperature. Different climate and situation bring it various needs, and consequently

[1] Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. Prosper Lucas, *de l'Hérédité*.

a different course of actions; and this, again, a different set of habits; and still again, a different set of aptitudes and instincts. Man, forced to accommodate himself to circumstances, contracts a temperament and a character corresponding to them; and his character, like his temperament, is so much more stable, as the external impression is made upon him by more numerous repetitions, and is transmitted to his progeny by a more ancient descent. So that at any moment we may consider the character of a people as an abridgment of all its preceding actions and sensations; that is, as a quantity and as a weight, not infinite,[1] since everything in nature is finite, but disproportioned to the rest, and almost impossible to lift, since every moment of an almost infinite past has contributed to increase it, and because, in order to raise the scale, one must place in the opposite scale a still greater number of actions and sensations. Such is the first and richest source of these master-faculties from which historical events take their rise; and one sees at the outset, that if it be powerful, it is because this is no simple spring, but a kind of lake, a deep reservoir wherein other springs have, for a multitude of centuries, discharged their several streams.

Having thus outlined the interior structure of a race, we must consider the surroundings in which it exists. For man is not alone in the world; nature surrounds him, and his fellow-men surround him; accidental and secondary tendencies come to place themselves on his primitive tendencies, and physical or social circumstances disturb or confirm the character committed to their charge. In course of time the climate has had its effect. Though we can follow but obscurely the Aryan peoples from their common fatherland to their final countries, we can yet assert that the profound differences which are manifest between the German races on the one side, and the Greek and Latin on the other arise for the most part from the difference between the countries in which they are settled: some in cold moist lands, deep in black marshy forests or on the shores of a wild ocean, caged in by melancholy or violent sensations, prone to drunkenness and gluttony, bent on a fighting, blood-spilling life; others, again, within a lovely landscape, on a bright and laughing sea-coast, enticed to navigation and commerce, exempt from gross cravings of the stomach, inclined from the beginning to social ways, to a settled organisation of the state, to feelings and dispositions such as develop the art of oratory, the talent for enjoyment, the inventions of science, letters, arts. Sometimes the state policy has been at work, as in the two Italian civilisations: the first wholly turned to action, conquest, government, legislation, by the original site of its city of refuge, by its border-land emporium, by an armed aristocracy, who, by inviting and drilling the strangers and the conquered, presently set face to face two hostile armies, having no escape from its internal discords and its greedy instincts but in systematic warfare; the other, shut

[1] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part iv. axiom.

out from unity and any great political ambition by the stability of its municipal character, the cosmopolitan condition of its pope, and the military intervention of neighbouring nations, directed the whole of its magnificent, harmonious bent towards the worship of pleasure and beauty. Sometimes the social conditions have impressed their mark, as eighteen centuries ago by Christianity, and twenty-five centuries ago by Buddhism, when around the Mediterranean, as in Hindoostan, the extreme results of Aryan conquest and civilisation induced an intolerable oppression, the subjugation of the individual, utter despair, a curse upon the world, with the development of metaphysics and myth, so that man in this dungeon of misery, feeling his heart softened, begot the idea of abnegation, charity, tender love, gentleness, humility, brotherly love—there, in a notion of universal nothingness, here under the Fatherhood of God. Look around you upon the regulating instincts and faculties implanted in a race—in short, the mood of intelligence in which it thinks and acts at the present time: you will discover most often the work of some one of these prolonged situations, these surrounding circumstances, persistent and gigantic pressures, brought to bear upon an aggregate of men who, singly and together, from generation to generation, are continually moulded and modelled by their action; in Spain, an eight-century crusade against the Mussulmans, protracted even beyond and until the exhaustion of the nation by the expulsion of the Moors, the spoliation of the Jews, the establishment of the Inquisition, the Catholic wars; in England, a political establishment of eight centuries, which keeps a man erect and respectful, in independence and obedience, and accustoms him to strive unitedly, under the authority of the law; in France, a Latin organisation, which, imposed first upon docile barbarians, then shattered in the universal crash, is reformed from within under a lurking conspiracy of the national instinct, is developed under hereditary kings, ends in a sort of egality-republic, centralised, administrative, under dynasties exposed to revolution. These are the most efficacious of the visible causes which mould the primitive man: they are to nations what education, career, condition, abode, are to individuals; and they seem to comprehend everything, since they comprehend all external powers which shape human matter, and by which the external acts on the internal.

There is yet a third rank of causes; for, with the forces within and without, there is the work which they have already produced together, and this work itself contributes to produce that which follows. Beside the permanent impulse and the given surroundings, there is the acquired momentum. When the national character and surrounding circumstances operate, it is not upon a *tabula rasa*, but on a ground on which marks are already impressed. According as one takes the ground at one moment or another, the imprint is different; and this is the cause that the total effect is different. Consider, for instance, two epochs of a literature or an art,—French tragedy under Corneille and

under Voltaire, the Greek drama under Æschylus and under Euripides, Italian painting under da Vinci and under Guido. Truly, at either of these two extreme points the general idea has not changed; it is always the same human type which is its subject of representation or painting; the mould of verse, the structure of the drama, the form of body has endured. But among several differences there is this, that the one artist is the precursor, the other the successor; the first has no model, the second has; the first sees objects face to face, the second sees them through the first; that many great branches of art are lost, many details are perfected, that simplicity and grandeur of impression have diminished, pleasing and refined forms have increased,—in short, that the first work has outlived the second. So it is with a people as with a plant; the same sap, under the same temperature, and in the same soil, produces, at different steps of its progressive development, different formations, buds, flowers, fruits, seed-vessels, in such a manner that the one which follows has always the first for its condition, and grows from its death. And if now you consider no longer a brief epoch, as our own time, but one of those wide intervals which embrace one or more centuries, like the middle ages, or our last classic age, the conclusion will be similar. A certain dominant idea has had sway; men, for two, for five hundred years, have taken to themselves a certain ideal model of man: in the middle ages, the knight and the monk; in our classic age, the courtier, the man who speaks well. This creative and universal idea is displayed over the whole field of action and thought; and after covering the world with its works, involuntarily systematic, it has faded, it has died away, and lo, a new idea springs up, destined to a like domination, and the like number of creations. And here remember that the second depends in part upon the first, and that the first, uniting its effect with those of national genius and surrounding circumstances, imposes on each new creation its bent and direction. The great historical currents are formed after this law—the long dominations of one intellectual pattern, or a master idea, such as the period of spontaneous creations called the Renaissance, or the period of oratorical models called the Classical Age, or the series of mystical compositions called the Alexandrian and Christian eras, or the series of mythological efflorescences which we meet with in the infancy of the German people, of the Indian and the Greek. Here as elsewhere we have but a mechanical problem; the total effect is a result, depending entirely on the magnitude and direction of the producing causes. The only difference which separates these moral problems from physical ones is, that the magnitude and direction cannot be valued or computed in the first as in the second. If a need or a faculty is a quantity, capable of degrees, like a pressure or a weight, this quantity is not measurable like the pressure or the weight. We cannot define it in an exact or approximative formula; we cannot have more, or give more, in respect of it, than a literary impression; we are limited to marking and quot

ing the salient points by which it is manifested, and which indicate approximately and roughly the part of the scale which is its position. But though the means of notation are not the same in the moral and physical sciences, yet as in both the matter is the same, equally made up of forces, magnitudes, and directions, we may say that in both the final result is produced after the same method. It is great or small, as the fundamental forces are great or small and act more or less exactly in the same sense, according as the distinct effects of race, circumstance, and epoch combine to add the one to the other, or to annul one another. Thus are explained the long impotences and the brilliant triumphs which make their appearance irregularly and without visible cause in the life of a people; they are caused by internal concords or contrarieties. There was such a concord when in the seventeenth century the sociable character and the conversational aptitude, innate in France, encountered the drawing-room manners and the epoch of oratorical analysis; when in the nineteenth century the profound and elastic genius of Germany encountered the age of philosophical compositions and of cosmopolitan criticism. There was such a contrariety when in the seventeenth century the rude and lonely English genius tried blunderingly to adopt a novel politeness; when in the sixteenth century the lucid and prosaic French spirit tried vainly to cradle a living poetry. That hidden concord of creative forces produced the finished urbanity and the noble and regular literature under Louis XIV. and Bossuet, the grand metaphysics and broad critical sympathy of Hegel and Goethe. That hidden contrariety of creative forces produced the imperfect literature, the scandalous comedy, the abortive drama under Dryden and Wycherley, the vile Greek importations, the groping elaborate efforts, the scant half-graces under Ronsard and the Pleiad. So much we can say with confidence, that the unknown creations towards which the current of the centuries conducts us, will be raised up and regulated altogether by the three primordial forces; that if these forces could be measured and computed, one might deduce from them as from a formula the specialties of future civilisation; and that if, in spite of the evident crudeness of our notations, and the fundamental inexactness of our measures, we try now to form some idea of our general destiny, it is upon an examination of these forces that we must ground our prophecy. For in enumerating them, we traverse the complete circle of the agencies; and when we have considered race, circumstance, and epoch, which are the internal mainsprings, the external pressure, and the acquired momentum, we have exhausted not only the whole of the actual causes, but also the whole of the possible causes of motion.

VI.

It remains for us to examine how these causes, when applied to a nation or an age, produce their results. As a rivulet falling from a height spreads its streams, according to the depth of the descent, stage

after stage, until it reaches the lowest level of the soil, so the disposition of intellect or soul impressed on a people by race, circumstance, or epoch, spreads in different proportions and by regular descents, down the diverse orders of facts which make up its civilisation.[1] If we arrange the map of a country, starting from the watershed, we find that below this common point the streams are divided into five or six principal basins, then each of these into several secondary basins, and so on, until the whole country with its thousand details is included in the ramifications of this network. So, if we arrange the psychological map of the events and sensations of a human civilisation, we find first of all five or six well-defined provinces—religion, art, philosophy, the state, the family, the industries; then in each of these provinces natural departments; and in each of these, smaller territories, until we arrive at the numberless details of life such as may be observed within and around us every day. If now we examine and compare these diverse groups of facts, we find first of all that they are made up of parts, and that all have parts in common. Let us take first the three chief works of human intelligence—religion, art, philosophy. What is a philosophy but a conception of nature and its primordial causes, under the form of abstractions and formularies? What is there at the bottom of a religion or of an art but a conception of this same nature and of these same causes, under form of symbols more or less concise, and personages more or less marked; with this difference, that in the first we believe that they exist, in the second we believe that they do not exist? Let the reader consider a few of the great creations of the intelligence in India, Scandinavia, Persia, Rome, Greece, and he will see that, throughout, art is a kind of philosophy made sensible, religion a poem taken for true, philosophy an art and a religion dried up, and reduced to simple ideas. There is therefore, at the core of each of these three groups, a common element, the conception of the world and its principles; and if they differ among themselves, it is because each combines with the common, a distinct element: now the power of abstraction, again the power to personify and to believe, and finally the power to personify and not believe. Let us now take the two chief works of human association, the family and the state. What forms the state but a sentiment of obedience, by which the many unite under the authority of a chief? And what forms the family but the sentiment of obedience, by which wife and children act under the direction of a father and husband? The family is a natural state, primitive and restrained, as the state is an artificial family, ulterior and expanded; and amongst the differences arising from the number, origin, and condition of its members, we discover in the small society as in the great, a like dis-

[1] For this scale of co-ordinate effects, consult Renan, *Langues Sémitiques*, ch. i.; Mommsen, *Comparison between the Greek and Roman Civilisations*, ch. ii. vol i 3d ed.; Tocqueville, *Conséquences de la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. iii.

position of the fundamental intelligence which assimilates and unites them. Now suppose that this element receives from circumstance, race, or epoch certain special marks, it is clear that all the groups into which it enters, will be modified proportionately. If the sentiment of obedience is merely fear,[1] you will find, as in most Oriental states, a brutal despotism, exaggerated punishment, oppression of the subject, servility of manners, insecurity of property, an impoverished production, the slavery of women, and the customs of the harem. If the sentiment of obedience has its root in the instinct of order, sociality, and honour, you will find, as in France, a perfect military organisation, a fine administrative hierarchy, a want of public spirit with occasional jerks of patriotism, ready docility of the subject with a revolutionary impatience, the cringing courtier with the counter-efforts of the genuine man, the refined sympathy between conversation and society on the one hand, and the worry at the fireside and among the family on the other, the equality of the married with the incompleteness of the married state, under the necessary constraint of the law. If, again, the sentiment of obedience has its root in the instinct of subordination and the idea of duty, you will find, as among the Germans, security and happiness in the household, a solid basis of domestic life, a tardy and incomplete development of society, an innate respect for established dignities, a superstitious reverence for the past, the keeping up of social inequalities, natural and habitual regard for the law. So in a race, according as the aptitude for general ideas varies, religion, art, and philosophy vary. If man is naturally inclined to the widest universal conceptions, and apt to disturb them at the same time by the nervous delicacy of his over-sensitive organisation, you will find, as in India, an astonishing abundance of gigantic religious creations, a glowing outgrowth of vast and transparent epic poems, a strange tangle of subtle and imaginative philosophies, all so well interwoven, and so penetrated with a common essence, as to be instantly recognised, by their breadth, their colouring, and their want of order, as the products of the same climate and the same intelligence. If, on the other hand, a man naturally staid and balanced in mind limits of his own accord the scope of his ideas, in order the better to define their form, you will find, as in Greece, a theology of artists and tale-tellers; distinctive gods, soon considered distinct from things, and transformed, almost at the outset, into recognised personages; the sentiment of universal unity all but effaced, and barely preserved in the vague notion of Destiny; a philosophy rather close and delicate than grand and systematic, confined to a lofty metaphysics,[2] but incomparable for logic, sophistry.

[1] Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois, Principes des trois gouvernements.*

[2] The Alexandrian philosophy had its birth from the West. The metaphysical notions of Aristotle are isolated; moreover, with him as with Plato, they are but a sketch. By way of contrast consider the systematic vigour of Plo

and morals; poetry and arts superior for clearness, spirit, scope, truth, and beauty to all that have ever been known. If, once more, man, reduced to narrow conceptions, and deprived of all speculative refinement, is at the same time altogether absorbed and straitened by practical occupations, you will find, as in Rome, rudimentary deities, mere hollow names, serving to designate the trivial details of agriculture, generation, household concerns, etiquettes in fact of marriage, of the farm, producing a mythology, a philosophy, a poetry, either worth nothing or borrowed. Here, as everywhere, the law of mutual dependence[1] comes into play. A civilisation forms a body, and its parts are connected with each other like the parts of an organic body. As in an animal, instincts, teeth, limbs, osseous structure, muscular envelope, are mutually connected, so that a change in one produces a corresponding change in the rest, and a clever naturalist can by a process of reasoning reconstruct out of a few fragments almost the whole body; even so in a civilisation, religion, philosophy, the organisation of the family, literature, the arts, make up a system in which every local change induces a general change, so that an experienced historian, studying some particular part of it, sees in advance and half predicts the character of the rest. There is nothing vague in this interdependence. In the living body the regulator is, first, its tendency to manifest a certain primary type; then its necessity for organs whereby to satisfy its wants, and for harmony with itself in order that it may live. In a civilisation, the regulator is the presence, in every great human creation, of a productive element, present also in other surrounding creations,—to wit, some faculty, aptitude, disposition, effective and discernible, which, being possessed of its proper character, introduces it into all the operations in which it assists, and, according to its variations, causes all the works in which it co-operates to vary also.

VII.

At this point we can obtain a glimpse of the principal features of human transformations, and begin to search for the general laws which regulate, not events only, but classes of events, not such and such religion or literature, but a group of literatures or religions. If, for instance, it were admitted that a religion is a metaphysical poem, accompanied by a belief; and remarking at the same time that there are certain epochs, races, and circumstances in which belief, the poetical and metaphysical faculty, are combined with an unwonted vigour; if we consider that Christianity and Buddhism were produced at periods of

tinus, Proclus, Schelling, and Hegel, or the admirable boldness of brahminical and buddhistic speculation.

[1] I have endeavoured on several occasions to give expression to this law notably in the preface to *Essais de Critique et d'Histoire.*

grand productions, and amid such miseries as raised up the fanatics of the Cévennes; if we recognise, on the other hand, that primitive religions are born at the awakening of human reason, during the richest blossoming of human imagination, at a time of the fairest artlessness and the greatest credulity; if we consider, also, that Mohammedanism appeared with the dawning of poetic prose, and the conception of national unity, amongst a people destitute of science, at a period of sudden development of the intellect,—we might then conclude that a religion is born, declines, is reformed and transformed according as circumstances confirm and combine with more or less exactitude and force its three generative instincts; and we should understand why it is endemic in India, amidst imaginative, philosophic, eminently fanatic brains; why it blossomed forth so strangely and grandly in the middle ages, amidst an oppressive organisation, new tongues and literatures; why it was aroused in the sixteenth century with a new character and heroic enthusiasm, amid universal regeneration, and during the awakening of the German races; why it breaks out into eccentric sects amid the rude American democracy, and under the bureaucratic Russian despotism; why, in fine, it is spread, at the present day, over Europe in such different dimensions and such various characteristics, according to the differences of race and civilisation. And so for every kind of human production—for literature, music, the fine arts, philosophy, science, statecraft, industries, and the rest. Each of these has for its direct cause a moral disposition, or a combination of moral dispositions: the cause given, they appear; the cause withdrawn, they vanish: the weakness or intensity of the cause measures their weakness or intensity. They are bound up with their causes, as a physical phenomenon with its condition, as the dew with the fall of the variable temperature, as dilatation with heat. There are such dualities in the moral as in the physical world, as rigorously bound together, and as universally extended in the one as in the other. Whatever in the one case produces, alters, suppresses the first term, produces, alters, suppresses the second as a necessary consequence. Whatever lowers the temperature, deposits the dew. Whatever develops credulity side by side with poetical thoughts, engenders religion. Thus phenomena have been produced; thus they will be produced. As soon as we know the sufficient and necessary condition of one of these vast occurrences, our understanding grasps the future as well as the past. We can say with confidence in what circumstances it will reappear, foresee without rashness many portions of its future history, and sketch with care some features of its ulterior development.

VIII.

History is now upon, or perhaps almost upon this footing, that it must proceed after such a method of research. The question propounded now-a-days is of this kind. Given a literature, philosophy,

society, art, group of arts, what is the moral condition which produced it? what the conditions of race, epoch, circumstance, the most fitted to produce this moral condition? There is a distinct moral condition for each of these formations, and for each of their branches; one for art in general, one for each kind of art—for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, poetry; each has its special germ in the wide field of human psychology; each has its law, and it is by virtue of this law that we see it raised, by chance, as it seems, wholly alone, amid the miscarriage of its neighbours, like painting in Flanders and Holland in the seventeenth century, poetry in England in the sixteenth, music in Germany in the eighteenth. At this moment, and in these countries, the conditions have been fulfilled for one art, not for others, and a single branch has budded in the general barrenness. For these rules of human growth must history search; with the special psychology of each special formation it must occupy itself; the finished picture of these characteristic conditions it must now labour to compose. No task is more delicate or more difficult; Montesquieu tried it, but in his time history was too new to admit of his success; they had not yet even a suspicion of the road necessary to be travelled, and hardly now do we begin to catch sight of it. Just as in its elements astronomy is a mechanical and physiology a chemical problem, so history in its elements is a psychological problem. There is a particular inner system of impressions and operations which makes an artist, a believer, a musician, a painter, a wanderer, a man of society; and of each the affiliation, the depth, the independence of ideas and emotions, are different: each has its moral history and its special structure, with some governing disposition and some dominant feature. To explain each, it would be necessary to write a chapter of esoteric analysis, and barely yet has such a method been rudely sketched. One man alone, Stendhal, with a singular bent of mind and a singular education, has undertaken it, and to this day the majority of readers find his books paradoxical and obscure: his talent and his ideas were premature; his admirable divinations were not understood, any more than his profound sayings thrown out cursorily, or the astonishing justness of his perception and of his logic. It was not perceived that, under the exterior of a conversationalist and a man of the world, he explained the most complicated of esoteric mechanisms; that he laid his finger on the mainsprings; that he introduced into the history of the heart scientific processes, the art of notation, decomposition, deduction; that he first marked the fundamental causes of nationality, climate, temperament; in short, that he treated of sentiments as they should be treated,—in the manner of the naturalist, namely, and of the natural philosopher, who constructs classifications and weighs forces. For this very reason he was considered dry and eccentric: he remained solitary, writing novels, voyages, notes, for which he sought and obtained a score of readers. And yet we find in

his books at the present day essays the most suitable to open the path which I have endeavoured to describe. No one has better taught us how to open our eyes and see, to see first the men that surround us and the life that is present, then the ancient and authentic documents, to read between the black and white lines of the pages, to recognise under the old impression, under the scribbling of a text, the precise sentiment, the movement of ideas, the state of mind in which they were written. In his writings, in Sainte-Beuve, in the German critics, the reader will see all the wealth that may be drawn from a literary work: when the work is rich, and one knows how to interpret it, we find there the psychology of a soul, frequently of an age, now and then of a race. In this light, a great poem, a fine novel, the confessions of a superior man, are more instructive than a heap of historians with their histories. I would give fifty volumes of charters and a hundred volumes of state-papers for the memoirs of Cellini, the epistles of St. Paul, the Table-talk of Luther, or the comedies of Aristophanes. In this consists the importance of literary works: they are instructive because they are beautiful; their utility grows with their perfection; and if they furnish documents, it is because they are monuments. The more a book represents visible sentiments, the more it is a work of literature; for the proper office of literature is to take note of sentiments. The more a book represents important sentiments, the higher is its place in literature; for it is by representing the mode of being of a whole nation and a whole age, that a writer rallies round him the sympathies of an entire age and an entire nation. This is why, amid the writings which set before our eyes the sentiments of preceding generations, a literature, and notably a grand literature, is incomparably the best. It resembles that admirable apparatus of extraordinary sensibility, by which physicians disentangle and measure the most recondite and delicate changes of a body. Constitutions, religions, do not approach it in importance; the articles of a code and of a catechism only show us the spirit roughly and without delicacy. If there are any writings in which politics and dogma are full of life, it is in the eloquent discourses of the pulpit and the tribune, memoirs, unrestrained confessions; and all this belongs to literature: so that, in addition to itself, it has all the advantage of other works. It is then chiefly by the study of literatures that one may construct a moral history, and advance toward the knowledge of psychological laws, from which events spring.

I am about to write the history of a literature, and to seek in it for the psychology of a people: if I have chosen this one in particular, it is not without a reason. I had to find a people with a grand and complete literature, and this is rare: there are few nations who have, during their whole existence, really thought and written. Among the ancients, the Latin literature is worth nothing at the outset, then borrowed and imitative. Among the moderns, German literature is almost

wanting for two centuries.[1] Italian literature and Spanish literature end at the middle of the seventeenth century. Only ancient Greece, modern France and England, offer a complete series of great significant monuments. I have chosen England, because being yet alive, and subject to direct examination, it may be better studied than a destroyed civilisation, of which we retain but the scraps, and because, being different from France, it has in the eyes of a Frenchman a more distinct character. Besides, there is a peculiarity in this civilisation, that apart from its spontaneous development, it presents a forced deviation, it has suffered the last and most effectual of all conquests, and that the three grounds whence it has sprung, race, climate, the Norman invasion, may be observed in its remains with perfect exactness; so well, that we may examine in this history the two most powerful moving springs of human transformation, natural bent and constraining force, and we may examine them without uncertainty or gap, in a series of authentic and unmutilated memorials. I have endeavoured to define these primary springs, to exhibit their gradual effects, to explain how they have ended by bringing to light great political, religious, and literary works, and by developing the recondite mechanism whereby the Saxon barbarian has been transformed into the Englishman of to-day.

[1] From 1550 to 1750.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BOOK I.

THE SOURCE.

CHAPTER I.

The Saxons.

I. The old country—Soil, sea, sky, climate—The new country—A moist land and a thankless soil—Influence of climate on character.

II The bodily structure—Food—Manners—Uncultivated instincts, German and English.

III. Noble instincts in Germany—The individual—The family—The state—Religion—The Edda—Tragi-heroic conception of the world and of mankind.

IV. Noble instincts in England—Warrior and chieftain—Wife and husband—The poem of Beowulf—Barbarian society and the barbarian hero.

V. Pagan poems—Kind and force of sentiments—Bent of mind and speech—Force of impression; harshness of expression.

VI. Christian poems—Wherein the Saxons are predisposed to Christianity—How converted—Their view of Christianity—Hymns of Cædmon—Funeral hymn—Poem of Judith—Paraphrase of the Bible.

VII. Why Latin culture took no hold on the Saxons—Reasons drawn from the Saxon conquest—Bede, Alcuin, Alfred—Translations—Chronicles—Compilations—Impotence of Latin writers—Reasons drawn from the Saxon character—Adhelm—Alcuin—Latin verse—Poetic dialogues—Bad taste of the Latin writers.

VIII. Contrast of German and Latin races—Character of the Saxon race—Its endurance under the Norman conquest.

I.

As you coast the North Sea from the Scheldt to Jutland, you will mark in the first place that the characteristic feature is the want of slope; marsh, waste, shoal; the rivers hardly drag themselves along, swollen and sluggish, with long, black-looking waves; the flooding stream oozes over the banks, and appears beyond them in stagnant pools. In Holland the soil is but a sediment of mud; here and there only does the earth cover it with a crust of mire, shallow and brittle. the mere alluvium of the river, which the river seems ever ready to

destroy. Thick mists hover above, being fed by ceaseless exhalations. They lazily turn their violet flanks, grow black, suddenly descend in heavy showers; the vapour, like a furnace-smoke, crawls for ever on the horizon. Thus watered, the plants multiply; in the angle between Jutland and the continent, in a fat muddy soil, 'the verdure is as fresh as that of England.'[1] Immense forests covered the land even after the eleventh century. The sap of this humid country, thick and potent, circulates in man as in the plants, and by its respiration, its nutrition, the sensations and habits which it generates, affects his faculties and his frame.

The land produced after this fashion has one enemy, to wit, the sea. Holland maintains its existence only by virtue of its dykes. In 1654 those in Jutland burst, and fifteen thousand of the inhabitants were swallowed up. One need see the blast of the North swirl down upon the low level of the soil, wan and ominous:[2] the vast yellow sea dashes against the narrow belt of coast which seems incapable of a moment's resistance; the wind howls and bellows; the sea-mews cry; the poor little ships flee as fast as they can, bending, almost overset, and endeavour to find a refuge in the mouth of the river, which seems as hostile as the sea. A sad and precarious existence, as it were face to face with a beast of prey. The Frisians, in their ancient laws, speak already of the league they have made against 'the ferocious ocean. Even in a calm this sea is unsafe. 'Before the eye spreads a mighty waste of waters; above float the clouds, grey and shapeless daughters of the air, which draw up the water in their mist-buckets from the sea, carry it along laboriously, and again suffer it to fall into the sea, a sad, useless, wearisome task.'[3] 'With flat and long extended maw, the shapeless north wind, like a scolding dotard, babbles with groaning, mysterious voice, and repeats his foolish tales.' Rain, wind, and surge leave room for naught but gloomy and melancholy thoughts. The very joy of the billows has in it an inexplicable restlessness and harshness. From Holland to Jutland, a string of small, deluged islands[4] bears witness to their ravages; the shifting sands which the tide floats up

[1] Malte-Brun, iv. 398. Denmark means 'low plain.' Not counting bays, gulfs, and canals, the sixteenth part of the country is covered by water. The dialect of Jutland bears still a great resemblance to the English.

[2] See Ruysdaal's painting in Mr. Baring's collection. Of the three Saxon islands, North Strandt, Busen, and Heligoland, North Strandt was inundated by the sea in 1300, 1483, 1532, 1615, and almost destroyed in 1634. Busen is a level plain, beaten by storms, which it has been found necessary to surround by a dyke. Heligoland was laid waste by the sea in 800, 1300, 1500, 1649, the last time so violently that only a portion of it survived. Turner, *Hist. of Angl. Saxons*, 1852, i. 97

[3] Heine, *die Nordsee*. Cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* book 2, for the impressions of the Romans, 'truculentia cœli.'

[4] Watten, Platen, Sande, Düneninseln.

obstruct with rocks the banks and entrance of the rivers.[1] The first Roman fleet, a thousand vessels, perished there; to this day ships wait a month or more in sight of port, tossed upon the great white waves, not daring to risk themselves in the shifting, winding channel, notorious for its wrecks. In winter a breastplate of ice covers the two streams; the sea drives back the frozen masses as they descend; they pile themselves with a crash upon the sandbanks, and sway to and fro; now and then you may see a vessel, seized as in a vice, split in two beneath their violence. Picture, in this foggy clime, amid hoar-frost and storm, in these marshes and forests, half-naked savages, a kind of wild beasts, fishers and hunters, even hunters of men; these are they, Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Frisians;[2] later on, Danes, who during the fifth and the ninth centuries, with their swords and battle-axes, took and kept the island of Britain.

A rude and foggy land, like their own, except in the depth of its sea and the safety of its coasts, which one day will call up real fleets and mighty vessels; green England—the word rises to the lips and expresses all. Here also moisture pervades everything; even in summer the mist rises; even on clear days you perceive it fresh from the great sea-girdle, or rising from vast but ever slushy moorlands, undulating with hill and dale, intersected with hedges to the limit of the horizon. Here and there a sunbeam strikes on the higher foliage with burning flash, and the splendour of the verdure dazzles and almost blinds you. The overflowing water straightens the flabby stems; they grow up, rank, weak, and filled with sap; a sap ever renewed, for the grey mists creep over a stratum of motionless vapour, and at distant intervals the rim of heaven is drenched by heavy showers. 'There are yet commons as at the time of the Conquest, deserted, abandoned,[3] wild, covered with furze and thorny plants, with here and there a horse grazing in the solitude. Joyless scene, poverty-stricken soil![4] What a labour it has been to humanise it! What impression it must have made on the men of the South, the Romans of Cæsar! I thought, when I saw it, of the ancient Saxons, wanderers from West and North, who came to settle in this land of marsh and fogs, on the border of these primeval forests, on the banks of these great muddy streams, which roll down their slime to meet the waves.[5] They must have lived as hunters and swineherds; grow, as before, brawny, fierce, gloomy. Take civilisation from this soil, and there will remain to the inhabit-

[1] Nine or ten miles out, near Heligoland, are the nearest soundings of about fifty fathoms.

[2] Palgrave, *Saxon Commonwealth*, vol. i.

[3] *Notes of a Journey in England.*

[4] Léonce de Lavergne, *De l'Agriculture anglaise.* 'The soil is much worse than that of France.'

[5] There are at least four rivers in England passing by the name of 'Ouse which is only another form of 'ooze.'—TR.

ants only war, the chase, gluttony, drunkenness Smiling love, sweet poetic dreams, art, refined and nimble thought, are for the happy shores of the Mediterranean. Here the barbarian, ill housed in his mud-hovel, who hears the rain rustling whole days in the oak leaves—what dreams can he have, gazing upon his mud-pools and his sombre sky?'

II.

Huge white bodies, cool-blooded, with fierce blue eyes, reddish flaxen hair; ravenous stomachs, filled with meat and cheese, heated by strong drinks; of a cold temperament, slow to love,[1] home-stayers, prone to brutal drunkenness: these are to this day the features which descent and climate preserve in the race, and these are what the Roman historians discovered in their former country. There is no living, in these lands, without abundance of solid food; bad weather keeps people at home; strong drinks are necessary to cheer them; the senses become blunted, the muscles are braced, the will vigorous. In every country the body of man is rooted deep into the soil of nature; and in this instance still deeper, because, being uncultivated, he is less removed from nature. In Germany, stormbeaten, in wretched boats of hide, amid the hardships and dangers of seafaring life, they were pre-eminently adapted for endurance and enterprise, inured to misfortune, scorners of danger. Pirates at first: of all kinds of hunting the man-hunt is most profitable and most noble; they left the care of the land and flocks to the women and slaves; seafaring, war, and pillage[2] was their whole idea of a freeman's work. They dashed to sea in their two-sailed barks, landed anywhere, killed everything; and having sacrificed in honour of their gods the tithe of their prisoners, and leaving behind them the red light of their burnings, went farther on to begin again. 'Lord,' says a certain litany, 'deliver us from the fury of the Jutes.' 'Of all barbarians[3] these are strongest of body and heart, the most formidable,'—we may add, the most cruelly ferocious. When murder becomes a trade, it becomes a pleasure. About the eighth century, the final decay of the great Roman corpse which Charlemagne had tried to revive, and which was settling down into corruption, called them like vultures to the prey. Those who had remained in Denmark, with their brothers of Norway, fanatical pagans, incensed against the Christians, made a descent on all the surrounding coasts. Their sea-kings,[4] 'who

[1] Tacitus, *De moribus Germanorum, passim:* Diem noctemque continuare potando, nulli proborum.—Sera juvenum Venus.—Totos dies juxta focum atque ignem agunt. Dargaud, *Voyage en Danemark.* 'They take six meals per day, the first at five o'clock in the morning. One should see the faces and meals at Hamburg and at Amsterdam.'

[2] Bede, v. 10. Sidonius, viii. 6. Lingard, *Hist. of England*, 1854, i. chap. 2

[3] Zozimos, iii. 147. Amm. Marcellinus, xxviii. 526.

[4] Aug. Thierry *Hist. S. Edmundi* vi. 441. See Ynglingasaga, and especially the Saga of Egil.

had never slept under the smoky rafters of a roof, who had never drained the ale-horn by an inhabited hearth,' laughed at wind and storms, and sang: 'The blast of the tempest aids our oars; the bellowing of heaven, the howling of the thunder, hurt us not; the hurricane is our servant, and drives us whither we wish to go.' 'We smote with our swords,' says a song attributed to Ragnar Lodbrog; 'to me it was a joy like having my bright bride by me on the couch. . . . He who has never been wounded lives a weary life.' One of them, at the monastery of Peterborough, kills with his own hand all the monks, to the number of eighty-four; others, having taken King Ælla, divided his ribs from the spine, and drew his lungs through the opening, so as to represent an eagle. Harold Harefoot, having seized his rival Alfred, with six hundred men, had them maimed, blinded, hamstrung, scalped, or embowelled.[1] Torture and carnage, greed of danger, fury of destruction, obstinate and frenzied bravery of an over-strong temperament, the unchaining of the butcherly instincts,—such traits meet us at every step in the old Sagas. The daughter of the Danish Jarl, seeing Egil taking his seat near her, repels him with scorn, reproaching him with 'seldom having provided the wolves with hot meat, with never having seen for the whole autumn a raven croaking over the carnage.' But Egil seized her and pacified her by singing: 'I have marched with my bloody sword, and the raven has followed me. Furiously we fought, the fire passed over the dwellings of men; we slept in the blood of those who kept the gates.' From such table-talk, and such maid's fancies, one may judge of the rest.[2]

Behold them now in England, more settled and wealthier: do you look to find them much changed? Changed it may be, but for the worse, like the Franks, like all barbarians who pass from action to enjoyment. They are more gluttonous, carving their hogs, filling themselves with flesh, swallowing down deep draughts of mead, ale, spiced wines, all the strong, coarse drinks which they can procure, and so they are cheered and stimulated. Add to this the pleasure of the fight. Not easily with such instincts can they attain to culture; to find a natural and ready culture, we must look amongst the sober and sprightly populations of the south. Here the sluggish and heavy[3] temperament remains long buried in a brutal life; people of the Latin race, never

[1] Lingard, *Hist. of England*, i. 164, says, however, 'Every tenth man out of the six hundred received his liberty, and of the rest a few were selected for slavery.'—Tr.

[2] Franks, Frisians, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, Icelanders, are one and the same people. Their language, laws, religion, poetry, differ but little. The more northern continue longest in their primitive manners. Germany in the fourth and fifth centuries, Denmark and Norway in the seventh and eighth, Iceland in the tenth and eleventh centuries, present the same condition, and the documents of each country will fill up the gaps that exist in the history of the others.

[3] Tacitus, *De mor. Germ.* xxii.; Gens nec astuta nec callida.

at a first glance see in them aught but large gross beasts, clumsy and ridiculous when not dangerous and enraged. Up to the sixteenth century, says an old historian, the great body of the nation were little else than herdsmen, keepers of beasts for flesh and fleece; up to the end of the eighteenth drunkenness was the recreation of the higher ranks; it is still that of the lower; and all the refinement and softening influence of civilisation have not abolished amongst them the use of the rod and the fist. If the carnivorous, warlike, drinking savage, proof against the climate, still shows beneath the conventions of our modern society and the softness of our modern polish, imagine what he must have been when, landing with his band upon a wasted or desert country, and becoming for the first time a settler, he saw on the horizon the common pastures of the border country, and the great primitive forests which furnished stags for the chase and acorns for his pigs. The ancient histories tell us that they had a great and a coarse appetite.[1] Even at the time of the Conquest the custom of drinking to excess was a common vice with men of the highest rank, and they passed in this way whole days and nights without intermission. Henry of Huntingdon, in the twelfth century, lamenting the ancient hospitality, says that the Norman kings provided their courtiers with only one meal a day, while the Saxon kings used to provide four. One day, when Athelstan went with his nobles to visit his relative Ethelfleda, the provision of mead was exhausted at the first salutation, owing to the copiousness of the draughts; but Saint Dunstan, forecasting the extent of the royal appetite, had furnished the house, so that though the cup-bearers, as is the custom at royal feasts, were able the whole day to serve it out in horns and other vessels, the liquor was not found to be deficient. When the guests were satisfied, the harp passed from hand to hand, and the rude harmony of their deep voices swelled under the vaulted roof. The monasteries themselves in Edgard's time kept up games, songs, and dances till midnight. To shout, to drink, to caper about, to feel their veins heated and swollen with wine, to hear and see around them the riot of the orgy, this was the first need of the Barbarians.[2] The heavy human brute gluts himself with sensations and with noise.

For this appetite there was a stronger grazing-ground,—I mean, blows and battle. In vain they attached themselves to the soil, became cultivators, in distinct communities and distinct regions, shut up[3] in their march with their kindred and comrades, bound together, sepa-

[1] Craik and MacFarlane, *Pictorial History of England*, 1837, i. 337. W. of Malmesbury. Henry of Huntingdon, vi. 365.

[2] Tacitus, *De moribus Germanorum*, xxii., xxiii.

[3] Kemble, *Saxons in England*, 1849, i. 70, ii. 184. 'The Acts of an Anglo-Saxon parliament are a series of treaties of peace between all the associations which make up the state; a continual revision and renewal of the alliances offensive and defensive of all the free men. They are universally mutual contracts for the maintenance of the frid or peace.

rated from the mass, marked round by sacred landmarks, by primeval oaks on which they cut the figures of birds and beasts, by poles set up in the midst of the marsh, which whosoever removed was punished with merciless tortures. In vain these Marches and Ga's[1] were grouped into states, and finally formed a half-regulated society, with assemblies and laws, under the lead of a single king; its very structure indicates the necessities to supply which it was created. They united in order to maintain peace; treaties of peace occupy their Parliaments; provisions for peace are the matter of their laws. War was waged daily and everywhere; the aim of life was, not to be slain, ransomed, mutilated, pillaged, hung and of course, if it was a woman, violated.[2] Every man was obliged to appear armed, and to be ready, with his burgh or his township, to repel marauders, who went about in bands; one such consisted of thirty-five and more. The animal was yet too powerful, too impetuous, too untamed. Anger and covetousness in the first place brought him upon his prey. Their history, such as that of the Heptarchy, is like a history of 'kites and crows.'[3] They slew the Britons or reduced them to slavery, fought the remnant of the Welsh, Irish, and Picts, massacred one another, were hewn down and cut to pieces by the Danes. In a hundred years, out of fourteen kings of Northumbria, seven were slain and six deposed. Penda of Mercia killed five kings, and in order to win the town of Bamborough, demolished all the neighbouring villages, heaped their ruins into an immense pile, sufficient to burn all the inhabitants, undertook to exterminate the Northumbrians, and perished himself by the sword at the age of eighty. Many amongst them were put to death by the thanes; one thane was burned alive; brothers slew one another treacherously. With us civilisation has interposed, between the desire and its fulfilment, the counteracting and softening preventive of reflection and calculation; here, the impulse is sudden, and murder and every kind of excess spring from it instantaneously. King Edwy[4] having married Elgiva, his relation within the prohibited degrees, quitted the hall where he was drinking on the very day of his coronation, to be with her. The nobles thought themselves insulted, and immediately Abbot Dunstan went himself to seek the young man. 'He found the adulteress,' says the monk Osbern, 'her mother, and the king together on the bed of debauch. He dragged the king thence violently, and setting the crown upon his head, brought

[1] A large district; the word is still existing in German, as Rheingau, Breisgau. —Tr.

[2] Turner, *Hist. of the Anglo-Sax.* ii. 440, Laws of Ina.

[3] Milton's expression. Lingard's *History*, i. chap. 3. This history bears much resemblance to that of the Franks in Gaul. See Gregory of Tours. The Saxons, like the Franks, were somewhat softened, but above all depraved, and were pillaged and massacred by those of their northern brothers who had remained in a savage state.

[4] Vita S. Dunstani, *Anglia Sacra*, ii.

him back to the nobles.' Afterwards Elgiva sent men to deprive Dunstan of his eyes, and then, in a revolt, saved herself and the king by hiding in the country; but the men of the North having seized her, 'hamstrung her, and then subjected her to the death which she deserved [1] Barbarity follows barbarity. At Bristol, at the time of the Conquest, as we are told by an historian of the time,[2] it was the custom to buy men and women in all parts of England, and to carry them to Ireland for sale. The buyers usually made the women pregnant, and took them to market in that condition, in order to ensure a better price. 'You might have seen with sorrow long files of young people of both sexes and of the greatest beauty, bound with ropes, and daily exposed for sale. . . . They sold in this manner as slaves their nearest relatives, and even their own children.' And the chronicler adds that, having abandoned this practice, they 'thus set an example to all the rest of England.' Would you know the manners of the highest ranks, in the family of the last king?[3] At a feast in the king's hall, Harold was serving Edward the Confessor with wine, when Tostig, his brother, stimulated by envy at his favour, seized him by the hair. They were separated. Tostig went to Hereford, where Harold had ordered a great royal banquet to be prepared. There he seized his brother's attendants, and cutting off their heads and limbs, he placed them in the vessels of wine, ale, mead, and cider, and sent a message to the king: 'If you go to your farm, you will find there plenty of salt meat, but you will do well to carry some more with you.' Harold's other brother, Sweyn, had violated the abbess Elgiva, assassinated Beorn the thane, and being banished from the country, had turned pirate. When we regard their deeds of violence, their ferocity, their cannibal jests, we see that they were not far removed from the sea-kings, or from the followers of Odin, who ate raw flesh, hung men as victims on the sacred trees of Upsal, and killed one another to make sure of dying as they had lived, in blood. A score of times the old ferocious instinct reappears beneath the thin crust of Christianity. In the eleventh century, Sigeward,[4] the great Duke of Northumberland, was afflicted with a dysentery; and feeling his death near, exclaimed, 'What a shame for me not to have been permitted to die in so many battles, and to end thus by a cow's death! At least put on my breastplate, gird on my sword, set my helmet on my head, my shield in my left hand, my golden battle-axe in my right,

[1] It is amusing to compare the story of Edwy and Elgiva in Turner, ii. 216, etc., and then in Lingard, i. 132, etc. The first accuses Dunstan, the other defends him.—Tr.

[2] *Life of Bishop Wolstan.*

[3] Tantæ sævitiæ erant fratres illi quod, cum alicujus nitidam villam conspicerent, dominatorem de nocte interfici juberent, totamque progeniem illius possessionemque defuncti obtinerent. Turner, iii. 27. Henry of Huntingdon, vi. 367.

[4] 'Penè gigas statura,' says the chronicler. H. of Huntingdon vi. 367 Kemble, i. 393. Turner, ii. 318.

so that a great warrior, like myself, may die as a warrior.' They did as he bade, and thus died he honourably with his arms. They had made one step, and only one, from barbarism.

III.

Under this native barbarism there were noble dispositions, unknown to the Roman world, which were destined to produce a better people out of the ruins of these. In the first place, 'a certain earnestness, which leads them out of idle sentiments to noble ones.'[1] From their origin in Germany this is what we find them, severe in manner, with grave inclinations and a manly dignity. They live solitary, each one near the spring or the wood which has taken his fancy.[2] Even in villages the cottages were detached; they must have independence and free air. They had no taste for voluptuousness; love was tardy, education severe, their food simple; all the recreation they indulged in was the hunting of the aurochs, and a dance amongst naked swords. Violent intoxication and perilous wagers were their weakest points; they sought in preference not mild pleasures, but strong excitement. In everything, in rude and masculine instincts, they were men. Each in his own home, on his own land, and in his own hut, was master of himself, firm and self-contained, in no wise restrained or shackled. If the commonweal received anything from him, it was because he gave it. In all great conferences he gave his vote in arms, passed judgment in the assembly, made alliances and wars on his own account, moved from place to place, showed activity and daring.[3] The modern Englishman existed entire in this Saxon. If he bends, it is because he is quite willing to bend; he is no less capable of self-denial than of independence; sacrifice is not uncommon, a man cares not for his life and his blood. In Homer the warrior often gives way, and is not blamed if he flees. In the Sagas, in the Edda, he must be over-brave; in Germany the coward is drowned in the mud, under a hurdle. Through all outbreaks of primitive brutality gleams obscurely the grand idea of duty, which is, the self-constraint exercised in view of some noble end. Marriage was pure amongst them, chastity instinctive. Amongst the Saxons the adulterer was punished by death; the adulteress was obliged to hang herself, or was stabbed by the knives of her companions. The wives of the Cimbrians, when they could not obtain from Marius assurance of their chastity, slew themselves with their own hands. They thought there was something sacred in a woman; they married but one, and kept faith with her. In fifteen centuries the idea of marriage is unchanged amongst them. The wife, on entering her husband's home,

[1] Grimm, *Mythology*, 53, Preface.

[2] Tacitus, xx., xxiii., xi., xii., xiii., et passim. We may still see the traces of this taste in English dwellings.

[3] Tacitus, xiii.

is aware that she gives herself altogether,[1] 'that she will have but one body, one life with him; that she will have no thought, no desire beyond; that she will be the companion of his perils and labours; that she will suffer and dare as much as he, both in peace and war.' And he, like her, knows that he gives himself. Having chosen his chief, he forgets himself in him, assigns to him his own glory, serves him to the death. 'He is infamous as long as he lives, who returns from the field of battle without his chief.'[2] It was on this voluntary subordination that feudal society was based. Man, in this race, can accept a superior, can be capable of devotion and respect. Thrown back upon himself by the gloom and severity of his climate, he has discovered moral beauty, while others discover sensuous beauty. This kind of naked brute, who lies all day by his fireside, sluggish and dirty, always eating and drinking,[3] whose rusty faculties cannot follow the clear and fine outlines of poetic forms, catches a glimpse of the sublime in his troubled dreams. He does not see it, but simply feels it; his religion is already within, as it will be in the sixteenth century, when he will cast off the sensuous worship of Rome, and confirm the faith of the heart.[4] His gods are not enclosed in walls; he has no idols. What he designates by divine names, is something invisible and grand, which floats through nature, and is conceived beyond nature,[5] a mysterious infinity which the sense cannot touch, but which 'reverence alone can appreciate;' and when, later on, the legends define and alter this vague divination of natural powers, an idea remains at the bottom of this chaos of giant-dreams; that the world is a warfare, and heroism the greatest excellence.

In the beginning, say the old Icelandic legends,[6] there were two worlds, Niflheim the frozen, and Muspell the burning. From the falling snow-flakes was born the giant Ymir. 'There was in times of old, where Ymir dwelt, nor sand nor sea, nor gelid waves; earth existed not, nor heaven above; 'twas a chaotic chasm, and grass nowhere.' There was but Ymir, the horrible frozen Ocean, with his children, sprung from his feet and his armpits; then their shapeless progeny, Terrors of the abyss, barren Mountains, Whirlwinds of the North, and

[1] Tacitus, xix., viii., xvi. Kemble, i. 232. [2] Tacitus, xiv.

[3] 'In omni domo, nudi et sordidi. . . . Plus per otium transigunt, dediti somno, ciboque; totos dies juxta focum atque ignem agunt.'

[4] Grimm, 53, Preface. Tacitus, x.

[5] 'Deorum nominibus appellant secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident. Later on, at Upsal for instance, they had images (Adam of Bremen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*). Wuotan (Odin) signifies etymologically the All-Powerful, him who penetrates and circulates through everything (Grimm, *Mythol.*).

[6] *Edda Sæmundi, Edda Snorri*, ed. Copenhagen, three vols. *passim*. Mr Bergmann has translated several of these poems into French, which Mr. Taine quotes. The translator has generally made use of the edition of Mr. Thorpe London, Trübner, 1866.

other malevolent beings, enemies of the sun and of life; then the cow Andhumbla, born also of melting snow, brings to light, whilst licking the hoar-frost from the rocks, a man Bur, whose grandsons kill the giant Ymir. 'From his flesh the earth was formed, and from his bones the hills, the heaven from the skull of that ice-cold giant, and from his blood the sea; but of his brains the heavy clouds are all created.' Then arose war between the monsters of winter and the luminous fertile gods, Odin the founder, Baldur the mild and benevolent, Thor the summer-thunder, who purifies the air and nourishes the earth with showers. Long fought the gods against the frozen Jötuns, against the dark bestial powers, the wolf Fenrir, the great Serpent, whom they drown in the sea, the treacherous Loki, whom they bind to the rocks, beneath a viper whose venom drops continually on his face. Long will the heroes, who by a bloody death deserve to be placed 'in the halls of Odin, and there wage a combat every day,' assist the gods in their mighty war. A day will, however, arrive when gods and men will be conquered. Then

'trembles Yggdrasil's ash yet standing; groans that ancient tree, and the Jötun Loki is loosed. The shadows groan on the ways of Hel,[1] until the fire of Surt has consumed the tree. Hrym steers from the east, the waters rise, the mundane snake is coiled in jötun-rage. The worm beats the water, and the eagle screams; the pale of beak tears carcases; (the ship) Naglfar is loosed. Surt from the South comes with flickering flame; shines from his sword the Val-god's sun. The stony hills are dashed together, the giantesses totter; men tread the path of Hel, and heaven is cloven. The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, fall from heaven the bright stars, fire's breath assails the all-nourishing tree, towering fire plays against heaven itself.'[2]

The gods perish, devoured one by one by the monsters; and the celestial legend, sad and grand now like the life of man, bears witness to the hearts of warriors and heroes.

There is no fear of grief, no care for life; they count it as dross when the idea has seized upon them. The trembling of the nerves, the repugnance of animal instinct which starts back before wounds and death, are all lost in an irresistible determination. See how in their epic[3] the sublime springs up amid the horrible, like a bright purple flower amid a pool of blood. Sigurd has plunged his sword into the dragon Fafnir, and at that very moment they looked on one another; and Fafnir asks, as he dies, 'Who art thou? and who is thy father? and what thy kin, that thou wert so hardy as to bear weapons against

[1] Hel, the goddess of death, born of Loki and Angrboda.—Tr.

[2] Thorpe, *The Edda of Sæmund, The Vala's Prophecy*, str. 48–56, p. 9 *et passim.*

[3] *Fafnismâl Edda.* This epic is common to the Northern races, as is the *Iliad* to the Greek populations, and is found almost entire in Germany in the *Nibelungen Lied.* The translator has also used Magnusson and Morris' poetical version of the *Völsunga Saga,* and certain songs of the *Elder Edda,* London, Ellis, 1870.

me?' 'A hardy heart urged me on thereto, and a strong hand and this sharp sword. . . . Seldom hath hardy eld a faint-heart youth.' After this triumphant eagle's cry Sigurd cuts out the worm's heart; but Regin, brother of Fafnir, drinks blood from the wound, and falls asleep. Sigurd, who was roasting the heart, raises his finger thoughtlessly to his lips. Forthwith he understands the language of the birds. The eagles scream above him in the branches. They warn him to mistrust Regin. Sigurd cuts off the latter's head, eats of Fafnir's heart, drinks his blood and his brother's. Amongst all these murders their courage and poetry grow. Sigurd has subdued Brynhild, the untamed maiden, by passing through the flaming fire; they share one couch for three nights, his naked sword betwixt them. 'Nor the damsel did ne kiss, nor did the Hunnish king to his arm lift her. He the blooming maid to Giuki's son delivered,' because, according to his oath, he must send her to her betrothed Gunnar. She, setting her love upon him, 'Alone she sat without, at eve of day, began aloud with herself to speak: "Sigurd must be mine; I must die, or that blooming youth clasp in my arms."' But seeing him married, she brings about his death. 'Laughed then Brynhild, Budli's daughter, once only, from her whole soul, when in her bed she listened to the loud lament of Giuki's daughter.' She put on her golden corslet, pierced herself with the sword's point, and as a last request said:

'Let in the plain be raised a pile so spacious, that for us all like room may be; let them burn the Hun (Sigurd) on the one side of me, on the other side my household slaves, with collars splendid, two at our heads, and two hawks; let also lie between us both the keen-edged sword, as when we both one couch ascended; also five female thralls, eight male slaves of gentle birth fostered with me.'[1]

All were burnt together; yet Gudrun the widow continued motionless by the corpse, and could not weep. The wives of the jarls came to console her, and each of them told her own sorrows, all the calamities of great devastations and the old life of barbarism.

'Then spoke Giaflang, Giuki's sister: "Lo, up on earth I live most loveless, who of five mates must see the ending, of daughters twain and three sisters, of brethren eight, and abide behind lonely." Then spake Herborg, Queen of Hunland: "Crueller tale have I to tell of my seven sons, down in the Southlands, and the eight man, my mate, felled in the death-mead. Father and mother, and four brothers on the wide sea the winds and death played with; the billows beat on the bulwark boards. Alone must I sing o'er them, alone must I array them, alone must my hands deal with their departing; and all this was in one season's wearing, and none was left for love or solace. Then was I bound a prey of the battle when that same season wore to its ending; as a tiring may must I bind the shoon of the duke's high dame, every day at dawning. From her jealous hate gat I heavy mocking, cruel lashes she laid upon me."'[2]

[1] Thorpe, *The Edda of Sæmund, Third lay of Sigurd Fafnicide*, str. 62–64, p. 83

[2] Magnusson and Morris, *Story of the Volsungs and Nibelungs, Lamentation of Gudrun*, p. 118 *et passim*.

All was in vain; no word could draw tears from those dry eyes. They were obliged to lay the bloody corpse before her, ere her tears would come. Then a flood of tears ran down over her knees, and 'the geese withal that were in the home-field, the fair fowls the may owned, fell a-screaming.' She wishes to die, like Sigurd, on the corpse of him whom alone she had loved, if they had not deprived her of memory by a magic potion. Thus affected, she departs in order to marry Atli, king of the Huns; and yet she goes against her will, with gloomy forebodings: for murder begets murder; and her brothers, the murderers of Sigurd, having been drawn to Atli's court, fall in their turn into a snare like that which they had themselves laid. Then Gunnar was bound, and they tried to make him deliver up the treasure. He answers with a barbarian's laugh:

'"Högni's heart in my hand shall lie, cut bloody from the breast of the valiant chief, the king's son, with a dull-edged knife." They the heart cut out from Hialli's breast; on a dish, bleeding, laid it, and it to Gunnar bare. Then said Gunnar, lord of men: "Here have I the heart of the timid Hialli, unlike the heart of the bold Högni; for much it trembles as in the dish it lies; it trembled more by half while in his breast it lay." Högni laughed when to his heart they cut the living crest-crasher; no lament uttered he. All bleeding on a dish they laid it, and it to Gunnar bare. Calmly said Gunnar, the warrior Niflung. "Here have I the heart of the bold Högni, unlike the heart of the timid Hialli; for it little trembles as in the dish it lies: it trembled less while in his breast it lay. So far shalt thou, Atli! be from the eyes of men as thou wilt from the treasures be. In my power alone is all the hidden Niflung's gold, now that Högni lives not. Ever was I wavering while we both lived; now am I so no longer, as I alone survive."'[1]

It was the last insult of the self-confident man, who values neither his own life nor that of another, so that he can satiate his vengeance. They cast him into the serpent's den, and there he died, striking his harp with his foot. But the inextinguishable flame of vengeance passed from his heart to that of his sister. Corpse after corpse fell on each other; a mighty fury hurls them open-eyed to death. She killed the children she had by Atli, gave him their hearts to eat, served in honey, one day on his return from the carnage, and laughed coldly as she told him on what he had fed. 'Uproar was on the benches, portentous the cry of men, noise beneath the costly hangings. The children of the Huns wept; all wept save Gudrun, who never wept, or for her bear-fierce brothers, or for her dear sons, young, simple.'[2] Judge from this heap of ruin and carnage to what excess the mind could attain. There were men amongst them, Berserkirs,[3] who in battle, seized with a sort of madness, showed a sudden and super-

[1] Thorpe, *The Edda of Sæmund, Lay of Atli*, str. 21–27, p. 117

[2] *Ibid*, str. 38, p. 119.

[3] This word signifies men who fought without a breastplate, perhaps in shirts only; *Scottice*, 'Baresarks.'—Tr

human strength, and ceased to feel their wounds. This is the conception of a hero as engendered by this race in its infancy. Is it not strange to see them place their happiness in battle, their beauty in death? Is there any people, Hindoo, Persian, Greek, or Gallic, which has formed so tragic a conception of life? Is there any which has peopled its infantine mind with such gloomy dreams? Is there any which has so entirely banished the sweetness from enjoyment, and the softness from pleasure? Energy, tenacious and mournful energy, an ecstasy of energy—such was their chosen condition. Carlyle said well, that in the sombre obstinacy of an English labourer still survives the tacit rage of the Scandinavian warrior. Strife for strife's sake—such is their pleasure. With what sadness, madness, waste, such a disposition breaks its bonds, we shall see in Shakspeare and Byron; with what completeness, in what duties it can entrench and employ itself under moral ideas, we shall see in the case of the Puritans.

IV.

They have established themselves in England; and however disordered the society which binds them together, it is founded, as in Germany, on generous sentiment. War is at every door, I am aware, but warlike virtues are behind every door; courage chiefly, then fidelity. Under the brute there is a free man, and a man with a heart. There is no man amongst them who, at his own risk,[1] will not make alliance, go forth to fight, undertake adventures. There is no group of men amongst them, who, in their Witenagemote, is not for ever concluding alliances one with another. Every clan, in its own district, forms a league of which all the members, 'brothers of the sword,' defend each other, and demand each other's blood at the price of their own. Every chief in his hall reckons that he has friends, not mercenaries, in the faithful ones who drink his beer, and who, having received as marks of his confidence, bracelets, swords, and suits of armour, will cast themselves between him and danger on the day of battle.[2] Independence and bravery smoulder amongst this young nation with violence and excess; but these are of themselves noble things; and no less noble are the sentiments which serve them for discipline,—to wit, an affectionate devotion, and respect for plighted faith. These appear in their laws, and break forth in their poetry. Amongst them greatness of heart gives matter for imagination. Their characters are not selfish and shifty, like those of Homer. They are brave hearts, simple[3] and strong, faithful to their relatives, to their master in arms, firm and stedfast to enemies and friends, abounding in courage, and ready for sacrifice. 'Old as I am,' says one, 'I will not budge hence. I mean

[1] See the Life of Sweyn, of Hereward, etc., even up to the time of the Conquest.

[2] Beowulf, *passim*, Death of Byrhtnoth.

[3] Tacitus, 'Gens nec callida, nec astuta.'

to die by my lord's side, near this man I have loved so much. He kept his word, the word he had given to his chief, to the distributor of gifts, promising him that they should return to the town, safe and sound to their homes, or that they would fall both together, in the thick of the carnage, covered with wounds. He lay by his master's side, like a faithful servant.' Though awkward in speech, their old poets find touching words when they have to paint these manly friendships. We cannot without emotion hear them relate how the old 'king embraced the best of his thanes, and put his arms about his neck, how the tears flowed down the cheeks of the greyhaired chief. . . . The valiant man was so dear to him. He could not stop the flood which mounted from his breast. In his heart, deep in the cords of his soul, he sighed in secret after the beloved man.' Few as are the songs which remain to us, they return to this subject again and again. The wanderer in a reverie dreams about his lord:[1] It seems to him in his spirit as if he kisses and embraces him, and lays head and hands upon his knees, as oft before in the olden time, when he rejoiced in his gifts. Then he wakes—a man without friends. He sees before him the desert tracks, the seabirds dipping in the sea, stretching wide their wings, the frost and the snow, mingled with falling hail. Then his heart's wounds press more heavily. The exile says:

'Often and often we two were agreed, that nought should divide us save Death himself! Now all is changed, and our friendship is as though it had never been. I must dwell here, far from my well-beloved friend, in the midst of enmities. I am forced to live under the forest leaves, under an oak, in this cavern under ground. Cold is this earth-dwelling; I am weary of it. Dark are the valleys, high the mountains, a sad wall of boughs, covered with brambles, a joyless abode. . . . My friends are in the earth; they whom I loved in life, the tomb holds them. And I am here before the dawn; I walk alone under the oak, amongst the earth-caverns. . . . Here often and often the loss of my lord has oppressed me with heavy grief.'

Amid their perilous mode of life, and the perpetual appeal to arms, there exists no sentiment more warm than friendship, nor any virtue stronger than loyalty.

Thus supported by powerful affection and firm fidelity, society is kept wholesome. Marriage is like the state. We find women associating with the men, at their feasts, sober and respected.[2] She speaks, and they listen to her; no need for concealing or enslaving her, in order to restrain or retain her. She is a person, and not a thing. The law demands her consent to marriage, surrounds her with guarantees, accords her protection. She can inherit, possess, bequeath, appear in courts of justice, in county assemblies, in the great congress of the elders. Frequently the name of the queen and of several other ladies is inscribed

[1] *The Wanderer, the Exile's Song, Codex Exoniensis*, published by Thorpe.
[2] Turner, *Hist. Angl. Sax.* iii. 63; *Pictorial History*, i. 340.

in the proceedings of the Witenagemote. Law and tradition maintain her integrity, as if she were a man, and side by side with the man. In Alfred[1] there is a portrait of the wife, which for purity and elevation equals all that we can devise with our modern refinement.

'Thy wife now lives for thee—for thee alone. She has enough of all kind of wealth for this present life, but she scorns them all for thy sake alone. She has forsaken them all, because she had not thee with them. Thy absence makes her think that all she possesses is nought. Thus, for love of thee, she is wasted away, and lies near death for tears and grief.'

Already, in the legends of the *Edda*, we have seen the maiden Sigrun at the tomb of Helgi, 'as glad as the voracious hawks of Odin, when they of slaughter know, of warm prey,' desiring to sleep still in the arms of death, and die at last on his grave. Nothing here like the love we find in the primitive poetry of France, Provence, Spain, and Greece. There is an absence of gaiety, of delight; beyond marriage it is only a ferocious appetite, an outbreak of the instinct of the beast. It appears nowhere with its charm and its smile; there is no love song in this ancient poetry. The reason is, that with them love is not an amusement and a pleasure, but a promise and a devotion. All is grave, even sombre, in civil relations as in conjugal society. As in Germany, amid the sadness of a melancholic temperament and the savagery of a barbarous life, the most tragic human faculties, the deep power of love and the grand power of will, are the only ones that sway and act.

This is why the hero, as in Germany, is truly heroic. Let us speak of him at length; we retain one of their poems, that of Beowulf, almost entire. Here are the stories, which the thanes, seated on their stools, by the light of their torches, listened to as they drank the ale of their king: we can glean thence their manners and sentiments, as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* those of the Greeks. Beowulf is a hero, a knight-errant before the days of chivalry, as the leaders of the German bands were feudal chiefs before the institution of feudalism.[2] He has 'rowed upon the sea, his naked sword hard in his hand, amidst the fierce waves and coldest of storms, and the rage of winter hurtled over the waves of the deep.' The sea-monsters, 'the many-coloured foes, drew him to the bottom of the sea, and held him fast in their gripe.' But he reached 'the wretches with his point and with his war-bill.' 'The mighty sea-beast received the war-rush through his hands,' and he slew nine nickers (sea-monsters). And now behold him, as he comes across the waves to succour the old King Hrothgar, who with his vassals sits afflicted in his great mead-hall, high and curved with pin-

[1] Alfred borrows his portrait from Boethius, but almost entirely re-writes it.

[2] Kemble thinks that the origin of this poem is very ancient, perhaps contemporary with the invasion of the Angles and Saxons, but that the version we possess is later than the seventh century.—Kemble's *Beowulf* text and translation, 1833. The characters are Danish.

nacles. For 'a grim stranger, Grendel, a mighty haunter of the marshes,' had entered his hall during the night, seized thirty of the thanes who were asleep, and returned in his war-craft with their carcasses; for twelve years the dreadful ogre, the beastly and greedy creature, father of Orks and Jötuns, devoured men and emptied the best of houses. Beowulf, the great warrior, offers to grapple with the fiend, and foe to foe contend for life, without the bearing of either sword or ample shield, for he has 'learned also that the wretch for his cursed hide recketh not of weapons,' asking only that if death takes him, they will bear forth his bloody corpse and bury it; mark his fen-dwelling; send to Hygelác, his chief, the best of war-shrouds that guards his breast.

He is lying in the hall, 'trusting in his proud strength; and when the mists of night arose, lo, Grendel comes, tears open the door,' seized a sleeping warrior: 'he tore him unawares, he bit his body, he drank the blood from the veins, he swallowed him with continual tearings.' But Beowulf seized him in turn, and 'raised himself upon his elbow.'

'The lordly hall thundered, the ale was spilled . . . both were enraged; savage and strong warders; the house resounded; then was it a great wonder that the wine-hall withstood the beasts of war, that it fell not upon the earth, the fair palace; but it was thus fast. . . . The noise arose, new enough; a fearful terror fell on the North Danes, on each of those who from the wall heard the outcry, God's denier sing his dreadful lay, his song of defeat, lament his wound.[1] . . . The foul wretch awaited the mortal wound; a mighty gash was evident upon his shoulder; the sinews sprung asunder, the junctures of the bones burst; success in war was given to Beowulf. Thence must Grendel fly sick unto death, among the refuges of the fens, to seek his joyless dwelling. He all the better knew that the end of his life, the number of his days was gone by.'[2]

For he had left on the land, 'hand, arm, and shoulder;' and 'in the lake of Nicors, where he was driven, the rough wave was boiling with blood, the foul spring of waves all mingled, hot with poison; the dye, discoloured with death, bubbled with warlike gore.' There remained a female monster, his mother, who like him 'was doomed to inhabit the terror of waters, the cold streams,' who came by night, and amidst drawn swords tore and devoured another man, Æschere, the king's best friend. A lamentation arose in the palace, and Beowulf offered himself again. They went to the den, a hidden land, the refuge of the wolf, near the windy promontories, where a mountain stream rusheth downwards under the darkness of the hills, a flood beneath the earth; the wood fast by its roots overshadoweth the water; there may one by night behold a marvel, fire upon the flood: the stepper over the heath, when wearied out by the hounds, sooner will give up his soul, his life upon the brink, than plunge therein to hide his head. Strange dragons and serpents swam there; 'from time to time the horn sang a dirge, a

[1] Kemble's *Beowulf*, xi. p. 32. [2] *Ibid.* xii. p. 34.

terrible song.' Beowulf plunged into the wave, descended, passed monsters who tore his coat of mail, to the ogress, the hateful manslayer, who, seizing him in her grasp, bore him off to her dwelling. A pale gleam shone brightly, and there, face to face, the good champion perceived

'the she-wolf of the abyss, the mighty sea-woman; he gave the war-onset with his battle-bill; he held not back the swing of the sword, so that on her head the ring-mail sang aloud a greedy war-song. . . . The beam of war would not bite. Then he caught the Grendel's mother by the shoulder; twisted the homicide, that she bent upon the floor. . . . She drew her knife broad, brown-edged, (and tried to pierce) the twisted breast-net which protected his life. . . . Then saw he among the weapons a bill fortunate with victory, an old gigantic sword, doughty of edge, ready for use, a work of giants. He seized the belted hilt; the warrior of the Scyldings, fierce and savage whirled the ring-mail; despairing of life, he struck furiously, so that it grappled hard with her about her neck; it broke the bone-rings, the bill passed through all the doomed body; she sank upon the floor; the sword was bloody, the man rejoiced in his deed; the beam shone, light stood within, even as from heaven mildly shines the lamp of the firmament.'[1]

Then he saw Grendel dead in a corner of the hall; and four of his companions, having with difficulty raised the monstrous head, bore it by the hair to the palace of the king.

That was his first labour; and the rest of his life was similar. When he had reigned fifty years on earth, a dragon, who had been robbed of his treasure, came from the hill and burned men and houses 'with waves of fire.'

'Then did the refuge of earls command to make for him a variegated shield, all of iron; he knew that a shield of wood could not help him, lindenwood opposed to fire. . . . The prince of rings was then too proud to seek the wide flier with a troop, with a large company; he feared not for himself that battle, nor did he make any account of the dragon's war, his laboriousness and valour.'

And yet he was sad, and went unwillingly, for he was 'fated to abide the end.' Then

'he was ware of a cavern, a mound under the earth, nigh to the sea-wave, the dashing of waters, which was full within of embossed ornaments and wires. . . . Then the king, hard in war, sat upon the promontory, and bade farewell to his household comrades. . . . I, the old guardian of my people, seek a feud.'

He let words proceed from his heart, the dragon came, vomiting fire; the blade bit not his body, and the king suffered painfully, involved in fire. His comrades had turned into the woods, all save Wiglaf, who went through the fatal smoke, knowing well 'that it was not the old custom' to abandon relation and prince, 'that he alone shall suffer distress, shall sink in battle.'

'The worm became furious, the foul insidious stranger, variegated with waves of fire, . . . hot and warlike fierce, he clutched the whole neck with bitter banes; he was bloodied with life-gore, the blood boiled in waves.'[2]

[1] *Beowulf*, xxii., xxiii., p. 62 *et passim.*

[2] *Ibid.* xxxiii.–xxxvi., p. 94 *et passim.*

They, with their swords, carved the worm in the midst. Yet the wound of the king became burning and swelled; he soon discovered that the poison boiled in his breast within, and sat by the wall upon a stone; 'he looked upon the work of giants, how the eternal cavern held within stone arches fast upon pillars.'

Then he said, 'I have held this people fifty years; there was not any king of my neighbours who dared to greet me with warriors, to oppress me with terror. . . . I held mine own well, I sought not treacherous malice, nor swore unjustly many oaths; on account of all this, I, sick with mortal wounds, may have joy. . . Now do thou go immediately to behold the hoard under the hoary stone, my dear Wiglaf. . . . Now, I have purchased with my death a hoard of treasures; it will be yet of advantage to the need of my people. . . . I give thanks . . . that I might before my dying day obtain such for my people . . . longer may I not here be.'[1]

This is thorough and real generosity, not exaggerated and pretended, as it will be later on in the romantic imaginations of babbling clerics, mere composers of adventure. Fiction as yet is not far removed from fact: the man breathes manifest under the hero. Rude as the poetry is, its hero is grand; he is so, simply by his deeds. Faithful, first to his prince, then to his people, he went alone, in a strange land, to venture himself for the delivery of his fellow-men; he forgets himself in death, while thinking only that it profits others. 'Each one of us,' he says in one place, 'must abide the end of his present life.' Let, therefore, each do justice, if he can, before his death. Compare with him the monsters whom he destroys, the last traditions of the ancient wars against inferior races, and of the primitive religion; think of his life of danger, nights upon the waves, man's efforts against the brute creation, the indomitable breast crushing the breasts of beasts, powerful muscles which, when exerted, tear the flesh of the monsters: you will see through the mist of legends, and under the light of poetry, the valiant men who, amid the furies of war and the raging of their own mood, began to settle a people and to found a state.

V.

One poem nearly whole and two or three fragments are all that remain of this lay-poetry of England. The rest of the pagan current, German and barbarian, was arrested or overwhelmed, first by the influx of the Christian religion, then by the conquest of the Norman-French. But the remnant more than suffices to show the strange and powerful poetic genius of the race, and to exhibit beforehand the flower in the bud.

If there has ever been anywhere a deep and serious poetic sentiment, it is here. They do not speak, they sing, or rather cry out. Each little verse is an acclamation, which breaks forth like a growl; their strong breasts heave with a groan of anger or enthusiasm, and a vehement phrase or indistinct expression rises suddenly, almost in spite

[1] *Beowulf*, xxxvii., xxxviii., p. 110 *et passim*. I have throughout always used the very words of Kemble's translation.—TR.

of them, to their lips. There is no art, no natural talent, for describing singly and in order the different parts of an object or an event. The fifty rays of light which every phenomenon emits in succession to a regular and well-directed intellect, come to them at once in a glowing and confused beam, disabling them by their force and convergence. Listen to their genuine war-chants, unchecked and violent, as became their terrible voices. To this day, at this distance of time, separated as they are by manners, speech, ten centuries, we seem to hear them still:—

'The army goes forth: the birds sing, the cricket chirps, the war-weapons sound, the lance clangs against the shield. Now shineth the moon, wandering under the sky. Now arise deeds of woe, which the enmity of this people prepares to do. . . . Then in the court came the tumult of war-carnage. They seized with their hands the hollow wood of the shield. They smote through the bones of the head. The roofs of the castle resounded, until Garulf fell in battle, the first of earth-dwelling men, son of Guthlaf. Around him lay many brave men dying. The raven whirled about, dark and sombre, like a willow leaf. There was a sparkling of blades, as if all Finsburg were on fire. Never have I heard of a more worthy battle in war.'[1]

This is the song on Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh:

'Here Athelstan king, of earls the lord, the giver of the bracelets of the nobles, and his brother also, Edmund the ætheling, the Elder a lasting glory won by slaughter in battle, with the edges of swords, at Brunan burh. The wall of shields they cleaved, they hewed the noble banners: with the rest of the family, the children of Edward. . . . Pursuing, they destroyed the Scottish people and the ship-fleet. . . . The field was coloured with the warrior's blood! After that the sun on high, . . . the greatest star! glided over the earth, God's candle bright! till the noble creature hastened to her setting. There lay soldiers many with darts struck down, Northern men over their shields shot. So were the Scotch; weary of ruddy battle. . . . The screamers of war they left behind; the raven to enjoy, the dismal kite, and the black raven with horned beak, and the hoarse toad; the eagle, afterwards to feast on the white flesh; the greedy battle-hawk, and the grey beast, the wolf in the wood.'[2]

Here all is image. In their impassioned minds events are not bald, with the dry propriety of an exact description; each fits in with its pomp of sound, shape, colouring; it is almost a vision which is raised, complete, with its accompanying emotions, joy, fury, excitement. In their speech, arrows are 'the serpents of Hel, shot from bows of horn;' ships are 'great sea-steeds,' the sea is 'a chalice of waves,' the helmet is 'the castle of the head:' they need an extraordinary speech to express their vehement sensations, so that after a time, in Iceland, when this kind of poetry is carried on, the earlier inspiration fails, art replaces nature, the Skalds are reduced to a distorted and obscure jargon. But whatever be the imagery, here as in Iceland, though unique, it is

[1] Conybeare's *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 1826, *Battle of Finsborough*, p. 175. The complete collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry has been published by M. Grein.

[2] Turner, *Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons*, iii., book 9, ch. i. p. 245.

too feeble. The poets cannot satisfy the inner emotion by a single word. Time after time they return to and repeat their idea. 'The sun on high, the great star, God's brilliant candle, the noble creature!' Four subsequent times they employ the same thought, and each time under a new aspect. All its different aspects rise simultaneously before the barbarian's eyes, and each word was like a shock of the semi-hallucination which excited him. Verily, in such a condition, the regularity of speech and of ideas is disturbed at every turn. The succession of thought in the visionary is not the same as in a reasoning mind. One colour induces another; from sound he passes to sound; his imagination is like a diorama of unexplained pictures. His phrases recur and change; he emits the word that comes to his lips without hesitation; he leaps over wide intervals from idea to idea. The more his mind is transported, the quicker and wider the intervals traversed. With one spring he visits the poles of his horizon, and touches in one moment objects which seemed to have the world between them. His ideas are entangled; without notice, abruptly, the poet will return to the idea he has quitted, and insert it in the thought to which he is giving expression. It is impossible to translate these incongruous ideas, which quite disconcert our modern style. At times they are unintelligible.[1] Articles, particles, everything capable of illuminating thought, of marking the connection of terms, of producing regularity of ideas, all rational and logical artifices, are neglected.[2] Passion bellows forth like a great shapeless beast; and that is all. It rises and starts in little abrupt lines; it is the acme of barbarism. Homer's happy poetry is copiously developed, in full narrative, with rich and extended imagery. All the details of a complete picture are not too much for him; he loves to look at things, he lingers over them, rejoices in their beauty, dresses them in splendid words; he is like the Greek girls, who thought themselves ugly if they did not bedeck arms and shoulders with all the gold coins from their purse, and all the treasures from their caskets; his long verses flow by with their cadences, and spread out like a purple robe under an Ionian sun. Here the clumsy-fingered poet mingles and clashes his ideas in a bold measure; if measure there be, he barely observes it; all his ornament is three words beginning with one letter. His chief care is to abridge, to imprison thought in a kind of mutilated cry.[3] The force of the internal

[1] The cleverest Anglo-Saxon scholars, Turner, Conybeare, Thorpe, recognise this difficulty.

[2] Turner, iii. 231, *et passim*. The translations in French, however literal, do injustice to the text; that language is too clear, too logical. No Frenchman can understand this extraordinary phase of intellect, except by taking a dictionary, and deciphering some pages of Anglo-Saxon for a fortnight.

[3] Turner remarks that the same idea expressed by King Alfred, in prose and then in verse, takes in the first case seven words, in the second five. *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, iii. 235.

impression, which, not knowing how to unfold itself, becomes condensed by accumulation; the harshness of the expression, which, subservient to the energy and shocks of the inner sentiment, seeks only to exhibit it intact and original, spite of all order and beauty,—such are the characteristics of their poetry, and these will be the characteristics of the poetry which is to follow.

VI.

A race so constituted was predisposed to Christianity, by its gloom its aversion to sensual and reckless living, its inclination for the serious and sublime. When their sedentary habits had reconciled their souls to a long period of ease, and weakened the fury which fed their sanguinary religion, they readily inclined to a new faith. The vague adoration of the great powers of nature, which eternally fight for mutual destruction, and, when destroyed, rise up again to the combat, had long since disappeared in the far distance. Society, on its formation, introduced the idea of peace and the need for justice, and the war-gods faded from the minds of men, with the passions which had created them. A century and a half after the invasion by the Saxons,[1] Roman missionaries, bearing a silver cross with a picture of Christ, came in procession chanting a litany. Presently the high priest of the Northumbrians declared in presence of the nobles that the old gods were powerless, and confessed that formerly 'he knew nothing of that which he adored;' and he among the first, lance in hand, assisted to demolish their temple. At his side a chief rose in the assembly, and said:

'You remember, it may be, O king, that which sometimes happens in winter when you are seated at table with your earls and thanes. Your fire is lighted, and your hall warmed, and without is rain and snow and storm. Then comes a swallow flying across the hall; he enters by one door, and leaves by another. The brief moment while he is within is pleasant to him; he feels not rain nor cheerless winter weather; but the moment is brief—the bird flies away in the twinkling of an eye, and he passes from winter to winter. Such, methinks, is the life of man on earth, compared with the uncertain time beyond. It appears for a while; but what is the time which comes after—the time which was before? We know not. If, then, this new doctrine may teach us somewhat of greater certainty, it were well that we should regard it.'

This restlessness, this feeling of the infinite and dark beyond, this sober, melancholy eloquence, were the harbingers of spiritual life.[2] We find nothing like it amongst the nations of the south, naturally pagan, and preoccupied with the present life. These utter barbarians embrace Christianity straightway, through sheer force of mood and clime. To no purpose are they brutal, heavy, shackled by infantine superstitions, capable, like King Knut, of buying for a hundred golden talents the arm of Augustine. They possess the idea of God. This

[1] 596–625. Aug. Thierry, i. 81; Bede, xii. 2.

[2] Jouffroy, *Problem of Human Destiny.*

grand God of the Bible, omnipotent and unique, who disappears almost entirely in the middle ages,[1] obscured by His court and His family, endures amongst them in spite of absurd and grotesque legends. They do not blot Him out under pious romances, by the elevation of the saints, or under feminine caresses, to benefit the infant Jesus and the Virgin. Their grandeur and their severity raise them to His high level; they are not tempted, like artistic and talkative nations, to replace religion by a fair and agreeable narrative. More than any race in Europe, they approach, by the simplicity and energy of their conceptions, the old Hebraic spirit. Enthusiasm is their natural condition; and their new Deity fills them with admiration, as their ancient deities inspired them with fury. They have hymns, genuine odes, which are but a concrete of exclamations. They have no development; they are incapable of restraining or explaining their passion; it bursts forth, in raptures, at the vision of the Almighty. The heart alone speaks here—a strong, barbarous heart. Cædmon, says Bede, their old poet,[2] was a more ignorant man than the others, who knew no poetry; so that in the hall, when they handed him the harp, he was obliged to withdraw, being unable to sing like his companions. Once, keeping night-watch over the stable, he fell asleep. A stranger appeared to him, and asked him to sing something, and these words came into his head: 'Now we ought to praise the Lord of heaven, the power of the Creator, and His skill, the deeds of the Father of glory; how He, being eternal God, is the author of all marvels; who, almighty guardian of the human race, created first for the sons of men the heavens as the roof of their dwelling, and then the earth.'[3] Remembering this when he woke, he came to the town, and they brought him before the learned men, before the abbess Hilda, who, when they had heard him, thought that he had received a gift from heaven, and made him a monk in the abbey. There he spent his life listening to portions of Holy Writ, which were explained to him in Saxon, 'ruminating over them like a pure animal, turned them into most sweet verse.' Thus is true poetry born. These men pray with all the emotion of a new soul; they kneel; they adore; the less they know, the more they think. Some one has said that the first and most sincere hymn is this one word O! Theirs were hardly longer; they only repeated time after time some deep passionate word, with monotonous vehemence. 'In heaven art Thou, our aid and succour, resplendent with happiness! All things bow before Thee, before the glory of Thy Spirit. With one voice they call upon Christ; they all cry: Holy, holy art Thou, King of the angels of heaven, our Lord! and Thy judgments are just and great: they reign for ever and in all places, in the multitude of Thy works.' We are reminded of the songs of the servants of Odin, ton-

[1] Michelet, preface to *La Renaissance;* Didron, *Histoire de Dieu.*

[2] About 630. See *Codex Exoniensis,* Thorpe. [3] Bede, iv. 24

sured now, and clad in the garments of monks. Their poetry is the same; they think of God, as of Odin, in a string of short, accumulated, passionate images, like a succession of lightning-flashes; the Christian hymns embody the pagan. One of them, Adhelm, stood on a bridge leading to the town where he lived, and repeated warlike and profane odes alternately with religious poetry, in order to attract and instruct the men of his time. He could do it without changing his key. In one of them, a funeral song, Death speaks. It was one of the last Saxon compositions, containing a terrible Christianity, which seems at the same time to have sprung from the blackest depths of the *Edda*. The brief metre sounds abruptly, with measured stroke, like the passing bell. It is as if one could hear the dull resounding responses which roll through the church, while the rain beats on the dim glass, and the broken clouds sail mournfully in the sky; and our eyes, glued to the pale face of a dead man, feel beforehand the horror of the damp grave into which the living are about to cast him.

'For thee was a house built ere thou wert born; for thee was a mould shapen ere thou of thy mother camest. Its height is not determined, nor its depth measured; nor is it closed up (however long it may be) until I thee bring where thou shalt remain; until I shall measure thee and the sod of the earth. Thy house is not highly built; it is unhigh and low. When thou art in it, the heel-ways are low, the side-ways unhigh. The roof is built thy breast full nigh; so thou shalt in earth dwell full cold, dim, and dark. Doorless is that house, and dark it is within. There thou art fast detained, and Death holds the key. Loathly is that earth-house, and grim to dwell in. There thou shalt dwell, and worms shall share thee. Thus thou art laid, and leavest thy friends. Thou hast no friend that will come to thee, who will ever inquire how that house liketh thee, who shall ever open for thee the door, and seek thee, for soon thou becomest loathly and hateful to look upon.'[1]

Has Jeremy Taylor a more gloomy picture? The two religious poetries, Christian and pagan, are so like, that one might make a common catalogue of their incongruities, images, and legends. In Beowulf, altogether pagan, the Deity appears as Odin, more mighty and serene, and differs from the other only as a peaceful Bretwalda[2] differs from an adventurous and heroic bandit-chief. The Scandinavian monsters, Jötuns, enemies of the Æsir,[3] have not vanished; but they descend from Cain, and are the giants drowned by the flood.[4] Their new hell is nearly the ancient Nástrand,[5] 'a dwelling deadly cold, full of bloody

[1] Conybeare's *Illustrations*, p. 271.

[2] Bretwalda was a species of war-king, or temporary and elective chief of all the Saxons.—Tr.

[3] The Æsir (sing. As) are the gods of the Scandinavian nations, of whom Odin was the chief.—Tr.

[4] Kemble, i. i. xii. In this chapter he has collected many features which show the endurance of the ancient mythology.

[5] Nástrand is the strand or shore of the dead.—Tr.

eagles and pale adders;' and the dreadful last day of judgment, when all will crumble into dust, and make way for a purer world, resembles the final destruction of *Edda*, that 'twilight of the gods,' which will end in a victorious regeneration, an everlasting joy 'under a fairer sun.'

By this natural conformity they were able to make their religious poems indeed poems. Power in spiritual productions arises only from the sincerity of personal and original sentiment. If they can describe religious tragedies, it is because their soul was tragic, and in a degree biblical. They introduce their fierce vehemence into their verses, like the old prophets of Israel, their murderous hatreds, their fanaticism, all the shudderings of their flesh and blood. One of them, whose poem is mutilated, has related the history of Judith—with what inspiration we shall see. It needed a barbarian to display in such strong light excesses, tumult, murder, vengeance, and combat.

'Then was Holofernes exhilarated with wine; in the halls of his guests he laughed and shouted, he roared and dinned. Then might the children of men afar off hear how the stern one stormed and clamoured, animated and elated with wine. He admonished amply that they should bear it well to those sitting on the bench. So was the wicked one over all the day, the lord and his men, drunk with wine, the stern dispenser of wealth; till that they swimming lay over drunk, all his nobility, as they were death-slain.'[1]

The night having arrived, he commands them to bring into his tent 'the illustrious virgin;' then, going in to visit her, he falls drunk on his bed. The moment was come for 'the maid of the Creator, the holy woman.'

'She took the heathen man fast by his hair; she drew him by his limbs towards her disgracefully; and the mischief-ful odious man at her pleasure laid; so as the wretch she might the easiest well command. She with the twisted locks struck the hateful enemy, meditating hate, with the red sword, till she had half cut off his neck; so that he lay in a swoon, drunk and mortally wounded. He was not then dead, not entirely lifeless. She struck then earnest, the woman illustrious in strength, another time the heathen hound, till that his head rolled forth upon the floor. The foul one lay without a coffer; backward his spirit turned under the abyss, and there was plunged below, with sulphur fastened; for ever afterwards wounded by worms. Bound in torments, hard imprisoned, in hell he burns. After his course he need not hope, with darkness overwhelmed, that he may escape from that mansion of worms; but there he shall remain, ever and ever, without end, henceforth in that cavern-house, void of the joys of hope.'[2]

Has any one ever heard a sterner accent of satisfied hate? When Clovis had listened to the Passion play, he cried, 'Why was I not there with my Franks!' So here the old warrior instinct swelled into flame over the Hebrew wars. As soon as Judith returned,

'Men under helms (went out) from the holy city at the dawn itself. They

[1] Turner, *Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 271.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 272.

dinned shields; men roared loudly. At this rejoiced the lank wolf in the wood, and the wan raven, the fowl greedy of slaughter, both from the west, that the sons of men for them should have thought to prepare their fill on corpses. And to them flew in their paths the active devourer, the eagle, hoary in his feathers. The willowed kite, with his horned beak, sang the song of Hilda. The noble warriors proceeded, they in mail, to the battle, furnished with shields, with swelling banners. . . . They then speedily let fly forth showers of arrows, the serpents of Hilda, from their horn bows; the spears on the ground hard stormed Loud raged the plunderers of battle; they sent their darts into the throng of the chiefs. . . . They that awhile before the reproach of the foreigners, the taunts of the heathen endured.'[1]

Amongst all these unknown poets[2] there is one whose name we know, Cædmon, perhaps the old Cædmon who wrote the first hymn; like him, at all events, who, paraphrasing the Bible with a barbarian's vigour and sublimity, has shown the grandeur and fury of the sentiment with which the men of these times entered into their new religion. He also sings when he speaks; when he mentions the ark, it is with a profusion of poetic names, 'the floating house, the greatest of floating chambers, the wooden fortress, the moving house, the cavern, the great sea-chest,' and many more. Every time he thinks of it, he sees it with his mind, like a quick luminous vision, and each time under a new aspect, now undulating on the muddy waves, between two ridges of foam, now casting over the water its enormous shadow, black and high like a castle, 'now enclosing in its cavernous sides' the endless ferment of the caged beasts. Like the others, he wrestles with God in his heart; triumphs like a warrior in destruction and victory; and in relating the death of Pharaoh, can hardly speak from anger, or see, because the blood mounts to his eyes:

'The folk was affrighted, the flood-dread seized on their sad souls; ocean wailed with death, the mountain heights were with blood besteamed, the sea foamed gore, crying was in the waves, the water full of weapons, a death-mist rose; the Egyptians were turned back; trembling they fled, they felt fear: would that host gladly find their homes; their vaunt grew sadder: against them, as a cloud, rose the fell rolling of the waves; there came not any of that host to home, but from behind inclosed them fate with the wave. Where ways ere lay sea raged. Their might was merged, the streams stood, the storm rose high to heaven; the loudest army-cry the hostile uttered; the air above was thickened with dying voices. . . . Ocean raged, drew itself up on high, the storms rose, the corpses rolled.'[3]

Is the song of the Exodus more abrupt, more vehement, or more savage? These men can speak of the creation like the Bible, because they speak of destruction like the Bible. They have only to look into their own minds, in order to discover an emotion sufficiently strong to raise their souls to the height of their Creator. This emotion existed

[1] Turner, *Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 274.

[2] Grein, *Bibliothek der Angelsæchsischen poesie.*

[3] Thorpe, *Cædmon*, 1832, xlvii. p. 206.

already in their pagan legends; and Cædmon, in order to recount the origin of things, has only to turn to the ancient dreams. such as have been preserved in the prophecies of the *Edda*.

'There had not here as yet, save cavern-shade, aught been; but this wide abyss stood deep and dim, strange to its Lord, idle and useless; on which looked with his eyes the King firm of mind, and beheld those places void of joys; saw the dark cloud lower in eternal night, swart under heaven, dark and waste, until this worldly creation through the word existed of the Glory-King. . . . The earth as yet was not green with grass; ocean cover'd, swart in eternal night, far and wide the dusky ways.'[1]

In this manner will Milton hereafter speak, the descendant of the Hebrew seers, last of the Scandinavian seers, but assisted in the development of his thought by all the resources of Latin culture and civilisation. And yet he will add nothing to the primitive sentiment. Religious instinct is not acquired; it belongs to the blood, and is inherited with it. So it is with other instincts; pride in the first place, indomitable self-conscious energy, which sets man in opposition to all domination, and inures him against all grief. Milton's Satan exists already in Cædmon's, as the picture exists in the sketch; because both have their model in the race; and Cædmon found his originals in the northern warriors, as Milton did in the Puritans:

'Why shall I for his favour serve, bend to him in such vassalage? I may be a god as he. Stand by me, strong associates, who will not fail me in the strife. Heroes stern of mood, they have chosen me for chief, renowned warriors! with such may one devise counsel, with such capture his adherents; they are my zealous friends, faithful in their thoughts; I may be their chieftain, sway in this realm; thus to me it seemeth not right that I in aught need cringe to God for any good; I will no longer be his vassal.'[2]

He is overcome; shall he be subdued? He is cast into the 'where torment they suffer, burning heat intense, in midst of hell, fire and broad flames: so also the bitter seeks smoke and darkness;' will he repent? At first he is astonished, he despairs; but it is a hero's despair.

'This narrow place is most unlike that other that we ere knew,[3] high in heaven's kingdom, which my master bestow'd on me. . . . Oh, had I power of my hands, and might one season be without, be one winter's space, then with this host I— But around me lie iron bonds, presseth this cord of chain: I am powerless! me have so hard the clasps of hell, so firmly grasped! Here is a vast fire above and underneath, never did I see a loathlier landskip; the flame abateth not, hot over hell. Me hath the clasping of these rings, this hard-polish'd band, impeded in my

[1] Thorpe, *Cædmon*, ii. p. 7. A likeness exists between this song and corresponding portions of the *Edda*.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. p. 18.

[3] This is Milton's opening also. (See *Paradise Lost*, Book i. verse 242, etc.) One would think that he must have had some knowledge of Cædmon from the translation of Junius.

course, debarr'd me from my way; my feet are bound, my hands manacled, . . . so that with aught I cannot from these limb-bonds escape.'[1]

As there is nothing to be done against God, it is with His new creature, man, that he must busy himself. To him who has lost everything, vengeance is left; and if the conquered can enjoy this, he will find himself happy; 'he will sleep softly, even under his chains.'

VII.

Here the foreign culture ceased. Beyond Christianity it could not graft upon this barbarous stock any fruitful or living branch. All the circumstances which elsewhere softened the wild sap, failed here. The Saxons found Britain abandoned by the Romans; they had not yielded, like their brothers on the continent, to the ascendency of a superior civilisation; they had not become mingled with the inhabitants of the land; they had always treated them like enemies or slaves, pursuing like wolves those who escaped to the mountains of the west, oppressing like beasts of burden those whom they had conquered with the land. While the Germans of Gaul, Italy, and Spain became Romans, the Saxons retained their language, their genius and manners, and created in Britain a Germany outside of Germany. A hundred and fifty years after the Saxon invasion, the introduction of Christianity and the dawn of security attained by a society inclining to peace, gave birth to a kind of literature; and we meet with the venerable Bede, and later on, Alcuin, John Scotus Erigena, and some others, commentators, translators, teachers of barbarians, who tried not to originate but to compile, to pick out and explain from the great Greek and Latin encyclopedia something which might suit the men of their time. But the wars with the Danes came and crushed this humble plant, which, if left to itself, would have come to nothing.[2] When Alfred[3] the Deliverer became king, 'there were very few ecclesiastics,' he says, 'on this side of the Humber, who could understand in English their own Latin prayers, or translate any Latin writing into English. On the other side of the Humber I think there were scarce any; there were so few that, in truth, I cannot remember a single man south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom, who was capable of it.' He tried, like Charlemagne, to instruct his people, and turned into Saxon for their use several works, above all some moral books, as the *de Consolatione* of Boethius; but this very translation bears witness to the bar-

[1] Thorpe, *Cædmon*, iv. p. 23.

[2] They themselves feel their impotence and decrepitude. Bede, dividing the history of the world into six periods, says that the fifth, which stretches from the return out of Babylon to the birth of Christ, is the senile period; the sixth is the present, *ætas decrepita, totius morte sæculi consummanda.*

[3] Died in 901; Adhelm died 709, Bede died 735, Alcuin lived under Charlemagne, Erigena under Charles the Bald (843–877).

barism of his audience. He adapts the text in order to bring it down to their intelligence; the pretty verses of Boethius, somewhat pretentious, laboured, elegant, crowded with classical allusions of a refined and polished style worthy of Seneca, become an artless, long drawn out and yet abrupt prose, like a nurse's fairy tale, explaining everything, recommencing and breaking off its phrases, making ten turns about a single detail; so low was it necessary to stoop to the level of this new intelligence, which had never thought or known anything. Here follows the Latin of Boethius, so affected, so pretty, with the English translation affixed:—

'Quondam funera conjugis
Vates Threicius gemens,
Postquam flebilibus modis
Silvas currere, mobiles
Amnes stare coegerat,
Junxitque intrepidum latus
Sævis cerva leonibus,
Nec visum timuit lepus
Jam cantu placidum canem;
Cum flagrantior intima
Fervor pectoris ureret,
Nec qui cuncta subegerant
Mulcerent dominum modi;
Immites superos querens,
Infernas adiit domos.
Illic blanda sonantibus
Chordis carmina temperans,
Quidquid præcipuis Deæ
Matris fontibus hauserat,
Quod luctus dabat impotens,
Quod luctum geminans amor,
Deflet Tartara commovens,
Et dulci veniam prece
Umbrarum dominos rogat.
Stupet tergeminus novo
Captus carmine janitor;
Quæ sontes agitant metu
Ultrices scelerum Deæ
Jam mœstæ lacrymis madent.
Non Ixionium caput
Velox præcipitat rota,
Et longa site perditus
Spernit flumina Tantalus.
Vultur dum satur est modis
Non traxit Tityi jecur.
Tandem, vincimur, arbiter
Umbrarum miserans ait.
Donemus comitem viro,
Emptam carmine conjugem.

'It happened formerly that there was a harper in the country called Thrace, which was in Greece. The harper was inconceivably good. His name was Orpheus. He had a very excellent wife, called Eurydice. Then began men to say concerning the harper, that he could harp so that the wood moved, and the stones stirred themselves at the sound, and wild beasts would run thereto, and stand as if they were tame; so still, that though men or hounds pursued them, they shunned them not. Then said they, that the harper's wife should die, and her soul should be led to hell. Then should the harper become so sorrowful that he could not remain among the men, but frequented the wood, and sat on the mountains, both day and night, weeping and harping, so that the woods shook, and the rivers stood still, and no hart shunned any lion, nor hare any hound; nor did cattle know any hatred, or any fear of others, for the pleasure of the sound. Then it seemed to the harper that nothing in this world pleased him. Then thought he that he would seek the gods of hell, and endeavour to allure them with his harp, and pray that they would give him back his wife. When he came thither, then should there come towards him the dog of hell, whose name was Cerberus,—he should have three heads,—and began to wag his tail, and play with him for his harping. Then was there also a very horrible gatekeeper, whose name should be Charon. He had also three heads, and he was very old. Then began the harper to beseech him that he would protect him while he was there, and bring him thence again safe. Then did he promise that to him, because he was desirous of the unaccustomed sound. Then went he further until he met the fierce goddesses, whom the common people call Parcæ, of whom they say, that they

Sed lex dona coerceat,
Nec, dum Tartara liquerit,
Fas sit lumina flectere.
Quis legem det amantibus!
Major lex fit amor sibi.
Heu! noctis prope terminos
Orpheus Eurydicem suam
Vidit, perdidit, occidit.
Vos hæc fabula respicit,
Quicunque in superum diem
Mentem ducere quæritis.
Nam qui tartareum in specus
Victus lumina flexerit,
Quidquid præcipuum trahit
Perdit, dum videt inferos.'

Book III. *Metre* 12.

know no respect for any man, but punish every man according to his deeds; and of whom they say, that they control every man's fortune. Then began he to implore their mercy. Then began they to weep with him. Then went he farther, and all the inhabitants of hell ran towards him, and led him to their king; and all began to speak with him, and to pray that which he prayed. And the restless wheel which Ixion, the king of the Lapithæ, was bound to for his guilt, that stood still for his harping. And Tantalus the king, who in this world was immoderately greedy, and whom that same vice of greediness followed there, he became quiet. And the vulture should cease, so that he tore not the liver of Tityus the king, which before therewith tormented him. And all the punishments of the inhabitants of hell were suspended, whilst he harped before the king. When he long and long had harped, then spoke the king of the inhabitants of hell, and said, Let us give the man his wife, for he has earned her by his harping. He then commanded him that he should well observe *that he never looked backwards* after he departed thence; and said, if he looked backwards, that he should lose the woman. But men can with great difficulty, if at all, restrain love! Wellaway! What! Orpheus then led his wife with him till he came to the boundary of light and darkness. Then went his wife after him. When he came forth into the light, then looked he behind his back towards the woman. Then was she immediately lost to him. This fable teaches every man who desires to fly the darkness of hell, and to come to the light of the true good, that he look not about him to his old vices, so that he practise them again as fully as he did before. For whosoever with full will turns his mind to the vices which he had before forsaken, and practises them, and they then fully please him, and he never thinks of forsaking them; then loses he all his former good unless he again amend it.'[1]

One speaks thus when an indistinct idea has to be impressed upon the mind. Boethius had for his audience senators, men of culture, who understood as well as we the slightest mythological allusion. Alfred is obliged to take them up and develop them, like a father or a master, who draws his little boy between his knees, and relates to him names, qualities, crimes and their punishments, which the Latin only hints at. But the ignorance is such that the teacher himself needs correction. He takes the Parcæ for the Erinyes, and gives Charon three heads like Cerberus. There is no adornment in his version; no *finesse* as in the original. Alfred himself has hard work to be understood. What, for instance, becomes of the noble Platonic moral, the apt interpretation after the style of Iamblichus and Porphyry? It is altogether dulled. He has to call everything by its name, and turn the eyes of his people to tangible and visible things. It is a sermon suited to his audience of thanes; the Danes whom he had converted by the sword needed a clear

[1] Fox's *Alfred's Boethius*, chap. 35. § 6, 1864.

moral. If he had translated for them exactly the fine words of Boethius, they would have opened wide their big stupid eyes and fallen asleep.

For the whole talent of an uncultivated mind lies in the force and oneness of its sensations. Beyond that it is powerless. The art of thinking and reasoning lies above it. These men lost all genius when they lost their fever-heat. They spun out awkwardly and heavily dry chronicles, a sort of historical almanacks. You might think them peasants, who, returning from their toil, came and scribbled with chalk on a smoky table the date of a year of scarcity, the price of corn, the changes in the weather, a death. Even so, side by side with the meagre Bible chronicles, which set down the successions of kings, and of Jewish massacres, are exhibited the exaltation of the psalms and the transports of prophecy. The same lyric poet can be at one time a brute and a genius, because his genius comes and goes like a disease, and instead of having it he simply is ruled by it.

'A.D. 611. This year Cynegils succeeded to the government in Wessex, and held it one-and-thirty winters. Cynegils was the son of Ceol, Ceol of Cutha, Cutha of Cynric.

'614. This year Cynegils and Cnichelm fought at Bampton, and slew two thousand and forty-six of the Welsh.

'678. This year appeared the comet-star in August, and shone every morning during three months like a sunbeam. Bishop Wilfrid being driven from his bishopric by King Everth, two bishops were consecrated in his stead.

'901. This year died Alfred, the son of Ethelwulf, six nights before the mass of All Saints. He was king over all the English nation, except that part that was under the power of the Danes. He held the government one year and a half less than thirty winters; and then Edward his son took to the government.

'902. This year there was the great fight at the Holme, between the men of Kent and the Danes.

'1077. This year were reconciled the King of the Franks, and William, King of England. But it continued only a little while. This year was London burned, one night before the Assumption of St. Mary, so terribly as it never was before since it was built.'[1]

It is thus the poor monks speak, with monotonous dryness, who after Alfred's time gather up and take note of great visible events; sparsely scattered we find a few moral reflections, a passionate emotion, nothing more. In the tenth century we see King Edgar give a manor to a bishop, on condition that he will put into Saxon the monastic regulation written in Latin by Saint Benedict. Alfred himself was almost the last man of culture; he, like Charlemagne, became so only by dint of determination and patience. In vain the great spirits of this age endeavour to link themselves to the relics of the old civilisation, and to raise themselves above the chaotic and muddy ignorance in which the others wallow. They rise almost alone, and on their death the rest are again enveloped in the mire. It is the human beast that

[1] All these extracts are taken from Ingram's *Saxon Chronicle*, 1823.

remains master; genius cannot find a place amidst revolt and bloodthirstiness, gluttony and brute force. Even in the little circle where he moves, his labour comes to nought. The model which he proposed to himself oppresses and enchains him in a cramping imitation; he aspires but to be a good copyist; he produces a gathering of centos which he calls Latin verses; he applies himself to the discovery of expressions, sanctioned by good models; he succeeds only in elaborating an emphatic, spoiled Latin, bristling with incongruities. In place of ideas, the most profound amongst them serve up the defunct doctrines of defunct authors. They compile religious manuals and philosophical manuals from the Fathers. Erigena, the most learned, goes to the extent of reproducing the old complicated dreams of Alexandrian metaphysics. How far these speculations and reminiscences soar above the barbarous crowd which howls and bustles in the plain below, no words can express. There was a certain king of Kent in the seventh century who could not write. Imagine bachelors of theology discussing before an audience of waggoners in Paris, not Parisian waggoners, but such as survive in Auvergne or in the Vosges. Among these clerks, who think like studious scholars in accordance with their favourite authors, and are doubly separated from the world as collegians and monks, Alfred alone, by his position as a layman and a practical man, descends in his Saxon translations and his Saxon verses to the common level; and we have seen that his effort, like that of Charlemagne, was fruitless. There was an impassable wall between the old learned literature and the present chaotic barbarism. Incapable, yet compelled, to fit into the ancient mould, they gave it a twist. Unable to reproduce ideas, they reproduced a metre. They tried to eclipse their rivals in versification by the refinement of their composition, and the prestige of a difficulty overcome. So, in our own colleges, the good scholars imitate the clever divisions and symmetries of Claudian rather than the ease and variety of Virgil. They put their feet in irons, and showed their smartness by running in shackles; they weighted themselves with rules of modern rhyme and rules of ancient metre; they added the necessity of beginning each verse with the same letter that began the last. A few, like Adhelm, wrote square acrostics, in which the first line, repeated at the end, was found also to the left and right of the piece. Thus made up of the first and last letters of each verse, it forms a border to the whole piece, and the morsel of verse is like a morsel of tapestry. Strange literary tricks, which changed the poet into an artisan! They bear witness to the contrariety which then impeded culture and nature, and spoiled at once the Latin form and the Saxon genius.

Beyond this barrier, which drew an impassable line between civilisation and barbarism, there was another, no less impassable, between the Latin and Saxon genius. The strong German imagination, in which glowing and obscure visions suddenly meet and violently clash, was

in contrast with the reasoning spirit, in which ideas gather and are developed in a regular order; so that if the barbarian, in his classical essays, retained any part of his primitive instincts, he succeeded only in producing a grotesque and frightful monster. One of them, this very Adhelm, a relative of King Ina, who sang on the town-bridge profane and sacred hymns alternately, too much imbued with Saxon poesy, simply to imitate the antique models, adorned his Latin prose and verse with all the 'English magnificence.'[1] You might compare him to a barbarian who seizes a flute from the skilled hands of a player of Augustus' court, in order to blow on it with inflated lungs, as if it were the bellowing horn of an aurochs. The sober speech of the Roman orators and senators becomes in his hands full of exaggerated and incoherent images; he heaps up his colours, and gives vent to the extraordinary and unintelligible nonsense of the later Skalds,—in short, he is a latinised Skald, dragging into his new tongue the ornaments of Scandinavian poetry, such as alliteration, by dint of which he congregates in one of his epistles fifteen consecutive words, all beginning with the same letter; and in order to make up his fifteen, he introduces a barbarous Græcism amongst the Latin words.[2] Many times amongst the others, the writers of legends, you will meet with deformation of Latin, distorted by the outbreak of a too vivid imagination; it breaks out even in their scholastic and scientific writing. Alcuin, in the dialogues which he made for the son of Charlemagne, uses like formulas the little poetic and trite phrases which abound in the national poetry. 'What is winter? the exile of summer. What is spring? the painter of earth. What is the year? the world's chariot. What is the sun? the splendour of the universe, the beauty of the firmament, the grace of nature, the glory of the day, the distributor of hours. What is the sea? the road of the brave, the frontier of earth, the hostelry of the waves, the source of showers.' More, he ends his instructions with enigmas, in the spirit of the Skalds, such as we still find in the old manuscripts with the barbarian songs. It was the last feature of the national genius, which, when it labours to understand a matter, neglects dry, clear, consecutive deduction, to employ grotesque, remote, oft-repeated imagery, and replaces analysis by intuition.

VIII.

Such was this race, the last born of the sister races, Saxon, Latin,

[1] William of Malmesbury's expression.

[2] Primitus (pantorum procerum prætorumque pio potissimum paternoque præsertim privilegio) panegyricum poemataque passim prosatori sub polo promulgantes, stridula vocum symphonia ac melodiæ cantile, næque carmine modulaturi hyn nizemus.

and Greek, who, in the decay of the other two, brings to the world a new civilisation, with a new character and genius. Inferior to these in many respects, it surpasses them in not a few. Amidst the woods and fens and snows, under a sad, inclement sky, gross instincts have gained the day. The German has not acquired gay humour, unreserved facility, the idea of harmonious beauty; his great phlegmatic body continues fierce and coarse, greedy and brutal; his rude and unpliable mind is still inclined to savagery, and restive under culture. Dull and congealed, his ideas cannot expand with facility and freedom, with a natural sequence and an instinctive regularity. But this spirit, void of the sentiment of the beautiful, is all the more apt for the sentiment of the true. The deep and incisive impression which he receives from contact with objects, and which as yet he can only express by a cry, will afterwards liberate him from the Latin rhetoric, and will vent itself on things rather than on words. Moreover, under the constraint of climate and solitude, by the habit of resistance and effort, his ideal is changed. Human and moral instincts have gained the empire over him; and amongst them, the need of independence, the disposition for serious and strict manners, the inclination for devotion and veneration, the worship of heroism. Here are the foundations and the elements of a civilisation, slower but sounder, less careful of what is agreeable and elegant, more based on justice and truth.[1] Hitherto at least the race is intact, intact in its primitive rudeness; the Roman cultivation could neither develop nor deform it. If Christianity took root, it was owing to natural affinities, but it produced no change in the native genius. Now approaches a new conquest, which is to bring this time men, as well as ideas. The Saxons, meanwhile, after the wont of German races, vigorous and fertile, have within the past six centuries multiplied enormously. They were now about two millions, and the Norman army numbered sixty thousand.[2] In vain these Normans become transformed, gallicised; by their origin, and substantially in themselves they are still the relatives of those whom they conquered. In vain they imported their manners and their poesy, and introduced into the language a third part of its words; this language continues altogether

[1] In Iceland, the country of the fiercest sea-kings, crimes are unknown; prisons have been turned to other uses; fines are the only punishment.

[2] See *Pictorial History*, i. 249. Following Doomsday Book, Mr. Turner reckons at three hundred thousand the heads of families mentioned. If each family consisted of five persons, that would make one million five hundred thousand people. He adds five hundred thousand for the four northern counties, for London and several large towns, for the monks and provincial clergy not enumerated. . . . We must accept these figures with caution. Still they agree with those of Macintosh, George Chalmers, and several others. Many facts show that the Saxon population was very numerous, and quite out of proportion to the Norman population.

German in element and in substance.[1] Though the grammar changed, it changed integrally, by an internal action, in the same sense as its continental cognates. At the end of three hundred years the conquerors themselves were conquered; their speech became English; and owing to frequent intermarriage, the English blood ended by gaining the predominance over the Norman blood in their veins. The race finally remains Saxon. If the old poetic genius disappears after the Conquest, it is as a river disappears, and flows for a while underground. In five centuries it will emerge once more.

[1] **Warton**, *History of English Poetry*, 1840, 3 vols., **preface.**

CHAPTER II.

The Normans.

I. The protection and character of Feudalism.

II. The Norman invasion; character of the Normans—Contrast with the Saxons—The Normans are French—How they became so—Their taste and architecture—Their spirit of inquiry and their literature—Chivalry and amusements—Their tactics and their success.

III. Bent of the French genius—Two principal characteristics; clear and consecutive ideas—Psychological form of French genius—Prosaic histories; lack of colour and passion, ease and discursiveness—Natural logic and clearness, soberness, grace and delicacy, refinement and cynicism—Order and charm—The nature of the beauty and of the ideas which the French have introduced.

IV. The Normans in England—Their position and their tyranny—They implant their literature and language—They forget the same—Learn English by degrees—Gradually English becomes gallicised.

V. They translate French works into English—Opinion of Sir John Mandeville—Layamon, Robert of Gloucester, Robert de Brunne—They imitate in English the French literature—Moral manuals, chansons, fabliaux, Gestes—Brightness, frivolity, and futility of this French literature—Barbarity and ignorance of the feudal civilisation—Geste of Richard Cœur de Lion, and voyages of Sir John Mandeville—Poorness of the literature introduced and implanted in England—Why it has not endured on the Continent or in England.

VI. The Saxons in England—Endurance of the Saxon nation, and formation of the English constitution—Endurance of the Saxon character, and formation of the English character.

VII.–IX. Comparison of the ideal hero in France and England—Fabliaux of Reynard, and ballads of Robin Hood—How the Saxon character makes way for and supports political liberty—Comparison of the condition of the Commons in France and England—Theory of the English constitution, by Sir John Fortescue—How the Saxon constitution makes way for and supports political liberty—Situation of the Church, and precursors of the Reformation in England—Piers Plowman and Wycliffe—How the Saxon character and the situation of the Norman Church make way for religious reform—Incompleteness and importance of the national literature—Why it has not endured.

I.

A CENTURY and a half had passed on the Continent since, amid the universal decay and dissolution, a new society had been formed, and new men had risen up. Brave men had at length made a

league against the Norsemen and the robbers. They had planted their feet in the soil, and the moving chaos of the general subsidence had become fixed by the effort of their great hearts and of their arms. At the mouths of the rivers, in the defiles of the mountains, on the margin of the waste borders, at all perilous passes, they had built their forts, each for himself, each on his own land, each with his faithful band; and they had lived like a scattered but watchful army, camped and confederate in their castles, sword in hand, in front of the enemy. Beneath this discipline a formidable people had been formed, fierce hearts in strong bodies,[1] intolerant of restraint, longing for violent deeds, born for constant warfare because steeped in permanent warfare, heroes and robbers, who, as an escape from their solitude, plunged into adventures, and went, that they might conquer a country or win Paradise, to Sicily, to Portugal, to Spain, to Livonia, to Palestine, to England.

II.

On the 27th of September 1066, at the mouth of the Somme, there was a great sight to be seen: four hundred large sailing vessels, more than a thousand transports, and sixty thousand men were on the point of embarking.[2] The sun shone splendidly after long rain; trumpets sounded, the cries of this armed multitude rose to heaven; on the far horizon, on the shore, in the wide-spreading river, on the sea which opens out thence broad and shining, masts and sails extended like a forest; the enormous fleet set out wafted by the south wind.[3] The people which it carried were said to have come from Norway, and one might have taken them for kinsmen of the Saxons, with whom they were to fight; but there were with them a multitude of adventurers, crowding from every direction, far and near, from north and south, from Maine and Anjou, from Poitou and Brittany, from Ile-de-France and Flanders, from Aquitaine and Burgundy;[4] and, in short, the expedition itself was French.

[1] See, amidst other delineations of their manners, the first accounts of the first Crusade. Godfrey clove a Saracen down to his waist.—In Palestine, a widow was compelled, up to the age of sixty, to marry again, because no fief could remain without a defender.—A Spanish leader said to his exhausted soldiers after a battle, 'You are too weary and too much wounded, but come and fight with me against this other band; the fresh wounds which we shall receive will make us forget those which we have.' At this time, says the General Chronicle of Spain, kings, counts, and nobles, and all the knights, that they might be ever ready, kept their horses in the chamber where they slept with their wives.

[2] For difference in numbers of the fleet and men, see Freeman, *Hist. of the Norm. Conq.*, 3 vols. 1867, iii. 381, 387.—Tr.

[3] For all the details, see *Anglo-Norman Chronicles*, iii. 4, as quoted by Aug. Thierry. I have myself seen the locality and the country.

[4] Of three columns of attack at Hastings, two were composed of auxiliaries. Moreover, the chroniclers are not at fault upon this critical point; they agree in stating that England was conquered by Frenchmen.

How comes it that, having kept its name, it had changed its nature? and what series of renovations had made a Latin out of a German people? The reason is, that this people, when they came to Neustria, were neither a national body, nor a pure race. They were but a band; and as such, marrying the women of the country, they introduced foreign blood into their children. They were a Scandinavian band, but deteriorated by all the bold knaves and all the wretched desperadoes who wandered about the conquered country;[1] and as such they received the foreign blood into their veins. Moreover, if the nomadic band was mixed, the settled band was much more so; and peace by its transfusions, like war by its recruits, had changed the character of the primitive blood. When Rollo, having divided the land amongst his followers, hung the thieves and their abettors, people from every country gathered to him. Security, good stern justice, were so rare, that they were enough to re-people a land.[2] He invited strangers, say the old writers, 'and made one people out of so many folk of different natures.' This assemblage of barbarians, refugees, robbers, immigrants, spoke Romance or French so quickly, that the second Duke, wishing to have his son taught Danish, had to send him to Bayeux, where it was still spoken. The great masses always form the race in the end, and generally the genius and language. Thus this people, so transformed, quickly became polished; the composite race showed itself of a ready genius, far more wary than the Saxons across the Channel, closely resembling their neighbours of Picardy, Champagne, and Ile-de-France. 'The Saxons,' says an old writer,[3] 'vied with each other in their drinking feats, and wasted their goods by day and night in feasting, whilst they lived in wretched hovels; the French and Normans, on the other hand, living inexpensively in their fine large houses, were besides studiously refined in their food and careful in their habits.' The former, still weighted by the German phlegm, were gluttons and drunkards, now and then aroused by poetical enthusiasm; the latter, made sprightlier by their transplantation and their alloy, felt the cravings of genius already making themselves manifest. 'You might see amongst them churches in every village, and monasteries in the cities, towering on high, and built in a style unknown before,' first in Normandy, and presently in England.[4] Taste had come to them at once—that is, the

[1] It was a Rouen fisherman, a soldier of Rollo, who killed the Duke of France at the mouth of the Eure. Hastings, the famous sea-king, was a labourer's son from the neighbourhood of Troyes.

[2] 'In the tenth century,' says Stendhal, 'a man wished for two things: 1st, not to be slain; 2d, to have a good leather coat.' See Fontenelle's *Chronicle*.

[3] William of Malmesbury.

[4] *Pictorial History*, i. 615. Churches in London, Sarum, Norwich, Durham, Chichester, Peterborough, Rochester, Hereford, Gloucester, Oxford, etc.—William of Malmesbury.

desire to please the eye, and to express a thought by outward representation, which was quite a new idea: the circular arch was raised on one or on a cluster of columns; elegant mouldings were placed about the windows; the rose window made its appearance, simple yet, like the flower which gives it its name; and the Norman style unfolded itself, original and measured, between the Gothic style, whose richness it foreshadowed, and the Romance style, whose solidity it recalled.

With taste, just as natural and just as quickly, was developed the spirit of inquiry. Nations are like children; with some the tongue is readily loosened, and they comprehend at once; with others it is loosened with difficulty, and they are slow of comprehension. The men before us had educated themselves nimbly, as Frenchmen do. They were the first in France who unravelled the language, fixing it and writing it so well, that to this day we understand their code and their poems. In a century and a half they were so far cultivated as to find the Saxons 'unlettered and rude.'[1] That was the excuse they made for banishing them from the abbeys and all valuable ecclesiastical posts. And, in fact, this excuse was rational, for they instinctively hated gross stupidity. Between the Conquest and the death of King John, they established five hundred and fifty-seven schools in England. Henry Beauclerk, son of the Conqueror, was trained in the sciences; so were Henry II. and his three sons: Richard, the eldest of these, was a poet. Lanfranc, first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, a subtle logician, ably argued the Real Presence; Anselm, his successor, the first thinker of the age, thought he had discovered a new proof of the existence of God, and tried to make religion philosophical by adopting as his maxim, 'Crede ut intelligas.' The notion was doubtless grand, especially in the eleventh century; and they could not have gone more promptly to work. Of course the science I speak of was but scholastic, and these terrible folios slay more understandings than they confirm. But people must begin as they can; and syllogism, even in Latin, even in theology, is yet an exercise of the mind and a proof of the understanding. Among the continental priests who settled in England, one established a library; another, founder of a school, made the scholars perform the play of Saint Catherine; a third wrote in polished Latin, 'epigrams as pointed as those of Martial.' Such were the recreations of an intelligent race, eager for ideas, of ready and flexible genius, whose clear thought was not overshadowed, like that of the Saxon brain, by drunken conceits, and the vapours of a greedy and well-filled stomach. They loved conversations, tales of adventure. Side by side with their Latin chroniclers, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, men of reflection, who could not only relate, but criticise here and there; there were rhyming chronicles in the vulgar tongue, as those of Geoffroy Gaimar, Bénoît de Sainte-Maure, Robert Wace. Do not imagine that

[1] Ordericus Vitalis.

their verse-writers were sterile of words or lacking in details. They were talkers, tale-tellers, speakers above all, ready of tongue, and never stinted in speech. Not singers by any means; they speak—this is their strong point, in their poems as in their chronicles. One of the earliest wrote the *Song of Roland;* upon this they accumulated a multitude of songs concerning Charlemagne and his knights, concerning Arthur and Merlin, the Greeks and Romans, King Horn, Guy of Warwick, every prince and every people. Their minstrels (*trouvères*), like their knights, draw in abundance from Gauls, Franks, and Latins, and descend upon East and West, in the wide field of adventure. They address themselves to a spirit of inquiry, as the Saxons to enthusiasm, and dilute in their long, clear, and flowing narratives the lively colours of German and Breton traditions; battles, surprises, single combats, embassies, speeches, processions, ceremonies, huntings, a variety of amusing events, employ their ready and adventurous imaginations. At first, in the *Song of Roland*, it is still kept in check; it walks with long strides, but only walks. Presently its wings have grown; incidents are multiplied; giants and monsters abound, the natural disappears, the song of the *jongleur* grows a poem under the hands of the *trouvère;* he would speak, like Nestor of old, five, even six years running, and not grow tired or stop. Forty thousand verses are not too much to satisfy their gabble; a facile mind, abundant, curious, descriptive, is the genius of the race. The Gauls, their fathers, used to delay travellers on the road to make them tell their stories, and boasted, like these, 'of fighting well and talking with ease.'

With chivalric poetry, they are not wanting in chivalry; principally, it may be, because they are strong, and a strong man loves to prove his strength by knocking down his neighbours; but also from a desire of fame, and as a point of honour. By this one word honour the whole spirit of warfare is changed. Saxon poets painted it as a murderous fury, as a blind madness which shook flesh and blood, and awakened the instincts of the beast of prey; Norman poets describe it as a tourney. The new passion which they introduce is that of vanity and gallantry; Guy of Warwick dismounts all the knights in Europe, in order to deserve the hand of the prude and scornful Félice. The tourney itself is but a ceremony, somewhat brutal I admit, since it turns upon the breaking of arms and limbs, but yet brilliant and French. To make a show of cleverness and courage, display the magnificence of dress and armour, be applauded by and please the ladies,—such feelings indicate men of greater sociality, more under the influence of public opinion, less the slaves of their own passions, void both of lyric inspiration and savage enthusiasm, gifted by a different genius, because inclined to other pleasures.

Such were the men who at this moment were disembarking in England to introduce their new manners and a new spirit, French at bottom, in character and speech, though with special and provincial features;

of all the most determined, with an eye on the main chance, calculating, having the nerve and the dash of our own soldiers, but with the tricks and precautions of lawyers; heroic undertakers of profitable enterprises; having travelled in Sicily, in Naples, and ready to travel to Constantinople or Antioch, so it be to take a country or carry off money; sharp politicians, accustomed in Sicily to hire themselves to the highest bidder and capable of doing a stroke of business in the heat of the Crusade, like Bohémond, who, before Antioch, speculated on the dearth of his Christian allies, and would only open the town to them under condition of their keeping it for himself; methodical and persevering conquerors, expert in administration, and handy at paper-work, like this very William, who was able to organise such an expedition, and such an army, and kept a written roll of the same, and who proceeded to register the whole of England in his Domesday Book. Sixteen days after the disembarkation, the contrast between the two nations was manifested at Hastings by its sensible effects.

The Saxons 'ate and drank the whole night. You might have seen them struggling much, and leaping and singing,' with shouts of laughter and noisy joy.[1] In the morning they crowded behind their palisades the dense masses of their heavy infantry, and with battle-axe hung round their neck awaited the attack. The wary Normans weighed the chances of heaven and hell, and tried to enlist God upon their side. Robert Wace, their historian and compatriot, is no more troubled by poetical imagination than they were by warlike inspiration; and on the eve of the battle his mind is as prosaic and clear as theirs.[2] The same spirit showed in the battle. They were for the most part bowmen and horsemen, well-skilled, nimble, and clever. Taillefer, the *jongleur*, who asked for the honour of striking the first blow, went singing, like a true French volunteer, performing tricks all the

[1] Robert Wace, *Roman du Rou.*

[2] *Ibid.* Et li Normanz et li Franceiz
Tote nuit firent oreisons,
Et furent en aflicions.
De lor péchiés confèz se firent
As proveires les regehirent,
Et qui n'en out provieres prèz,
A son veizin se fist confèz,
Pour ço ke samedi esteit
Ke la bataille estre debveit.
Unt Normanz a pramis e voé,
Si com li cler l'orent loé,
Ke à ce jor mes s'il veskeient,
Char ni saunc ne mangereient
Giffrei, éveske de Coustances,
A plusors joint lor pénitances.
Cli reçut li confessions
Et dona li béneiçons.

while.[1] Having arrived before the English, he cast his lance three times in the air, then his sword, and caught them again by the handle; and Harold's clumsy foot-soldiers, who only knew how to cleave coats of mail by blows from their battle-axes, 'were astonished, saying to one another that it was magic.' As for William, amongst a score of prudent and cunning actions, he performed two well-calculated ones, which, in this sore embarrassment, brought him safe out of his difficulties. He ordered his archers to shoot into the air; the arrows wounded many of the Saxons in the face, and one of them pierced Harold in the eye. After this he simulated flight; the Saxons, intoxicated with joy and wrath, quitted their entrenchments, and exposed themselves to the lances of the knights. During the remainder of the contest they only make a stand by small companies, fight with fury, and end by being slaughtered. The strong, mettlesome, brutal race threw themselves on the enemy like a savage bull; the dexterous Norman hunters wounded them, subdued, and drove them under the yoke.

III.

What then is this French race, which by arms and letters makes

[1] Robert Wace, *Roman du Rou :*

Taillefer ki moult bien cantout
Sur un roussin qui tot alout
Devant li dus alont cantant
De Kalermaine e de Rolant,
E d'Oliver et des vassals
Ki moururent à Roncevals.
Quant ils orent chevalchié tant
K'as Engleis vindrent aprismant.
'Sires! dist Taillefer, merci!
Je vos ai languement servi.
Tut mon servise me debvez,
Hui, si vos plaist, me le rendez
Por tout guerredun vos requier,
Et si vos voil forment preier,
Otreiez-mei, ke jo n'i faille,
Li primier colp de la bataille
Et li dus répont: 'Je l'otrei.'
Et Taillefer point à desrei;
Devant toz li altres se mist,
Un Englez féri, si l'ocist.
De sos le pis, parmie la pance,
Li fist passer ultre la lance,
A terre estendu l'abati.
Poiz trait l'espée, altre féri.
Poiz a crié: 'Venez, venez!
Ke fetes-vos? Férez, férez!'
Donc l'unt Englez avironé
Al secund colp k'il ou doné.

such a splendid entrance upon the world, and is so manifestly destined to rule, that in the East, for example, their name of Franks will be given to all the nations of the West? Wherein consists this new spirit, this precocious pioneer, this key of all middle-age civilisation? There is in every mind of the kind a fundamental activity which, when incessantly repeated, moulds its plan, and gives it its direction; in town or country, cultivated or not, in its infancy and its age, it spends its existence and employs its energy in conceiving an event or an object. This is its original and perpetual process; and whether it change its region, return, advance, prolong, or alter its course, its whole motion is but a series of consecutive steps; so that the least alteration in the length, quickness, or precision of its primitive stride transforms and regulates the whole course, as in a tree the structure of the first shoot determines the whole foliage, and governs the whole growth.[1] When the Frenchman conceives an event or an object, he conceives quickly and distinctly; there is no internal disturbance, no previous fermentation of confused and violent ideas, which, becoming concentrated and elaborated, end in a noisy outbreak. The movement of his intelligence is nimble and prompt like that of his limbs; at once and without effort he seizes upon his idea. But he seizes that alone: he leaves on one side all the long entangling offshoots whereby it is entwined and twisted amongst its neighbouring ideas; he does not embarrass himself with nor think of them; he detaches, plucks, touches but slightly, and that is all. He is deprived, or if you prefer it, he is exempt from those sudden half-visions which disturb a man, and open up to him instantaneously vast deeps and far perspectives. Images are excited by internal commotion; he, not being so moved, imagines not. He is only moved superficially; he is without large sympathy; he does not perceive an object as it is, complex and combined, but in parts, with a discursive and superficial knowledge. That is why no race in Europe is less poetical. Let us look at their epics; none are more prosaic. They are not wanting in number: *The Song of Roland, Garin le Loherain, Ogier le Danois,*[2] *Berthe aux grands Pieds.* There is a library of them. Though their manners are heroic and their spirit fresh, though they have originality, and deal with grand events, yet, spite of this, the narrative is as dull as that of the babbling Norman chroniclers. Doubtless Homer is precisely like them; but his magnificent titles of rosy-fingered Morn, the wide-bosomed Air, the divine and nourishing Earth, the earth-shaking Ocean, come in every instant and expand their purple tint over the speeches and battles, and the grand abounding similes which intersperse the narrative tell of a people more inclined to rejoice in beauty than to proceed straight to fact. But here we have facts, always facts, nothing but facts: the Frenchman wants to

[1] The idea of types is applicable throughout all physical and moral nature.

[2] *Danois* is a contraction of *le d'Ardennois*, from the Ardennes. —Tr.

know if the hero will kill the traitor, the lover wed the maiden; he must not be delayed by poetry or painting. He advances nimbly to the end of the story, not lingering for dreams of the heart or wealth of landscape. There is no splendour, no colour, in his narrative; his style is quite bare, and without figures; you may read ten thousand verses in these old poems without meeting one. Shall we open the most ancient, the most original, the most eloquent, at the most moving point, the *Song of Roland*, when Roland is dying? The narrator is moved, and yet his language remains the same, smooth, accentless, so penetrated by the prosaic spirit, and so void of the poetic! He gives an abstract of motives, a summary of events, a series of causes for grief, a series of causes for consolation.[1] Nothing more. These men regard the circumstance or the action by itself, and adhere to this view. Their idea remains exact, clear, and simple, and does not raise up a similar image to be confused with itself, to colour or transform itself. It remains dry; they conceive the divisions of the object one by one, without ever collecting them, as the Saxons would, in a rude, impassioned, glowing fantasy. Nothing is more opposed to their genius than the genuine songs and profound hymns, such as the English monks were singing beneath the low vaults of their churches. They would be disconcerted by the unevenness and obscurity of such language. They

[1] Genin, *Chanson de Roland:*

Co sent Rollans que la mort le trespent,
Devers la teste sur le quer li descent;
Desuz un pin i est alet curant,
Sur l'herbe verte si est culchet adenz;
Desuz lui met l'espée et l'olifan;
Turnat sa teste vers la païene gent;
Pour ço l'at fait que il voelt veirement
Que Carles diet e trestute sa gent,
Li gentilz quens, qui'l fut mort cunquérant.
Cleimet sa culpe, e menut e suvent,
Pur ses pecchez en puroffrid lo guant.
Li quens Rollans se jut desuz un pin,
Envers Espaigne en ad turnet sun vis,
De plusurs choses a remembrer le prist.
De tantes terres cume li bers cunquist,
De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,
De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit.
Ne poet muer n'en plurt et ne susprit.
Mais lui meisme ne volt mettre en ubli
Cleimet sa culpe, si priet Dieu mercit·
'Veire paterne, ki unques ne mentis,
Seint Lazaron de mort resurrexis,
Et Daniel des lions guaresis
Guaris de mei l'arome de tuz perilz
Pur les pecchez que en ma vie fis'

are not capable of such an access of enthusiasm and such excess of emotions. They never cry out, they speak, or rather they converse, and that at moments when the soul, overwhelmed by its trouble, might be expected to cease thinking and feeling. Thus Amis, in a mystery-play, being leprous, calmly requires his friend Amille to slay his two sons, in order that their blood should heal him of his leprosy; and Amille replies still more calmly.[1] If ever they try to sing, even in heaven, 'a roundelay high and clear,' they will produce little rhymed arguments, as dull as the dullest conversations.[2] Pursue this literature to its conclusion; regard it, like the Skalds, at the time of its decadence, when its vices, being exaggerated, display, like the Skalds, with marked coarseness the kind of mind which produced them. The Skalds fall off into nonsense; it loses itself into babble and platitude. The Saxon could not master his craving for exaltation; the Frenchman could not restrain the volubility of his tongue. He is too diffuse and too clear; the Saxon is too obscure and brief. The one was excessively agitated and carried away; the other explains and develops without measure. From the twelfth century the Gestes degenerate into rhapsodies and psalmodies of thirty or forty thousand verses. Theology enters into them; poetry becomes an interminable, intolerable litany, where the ideas, developed and repeated

Sun destre guant à Deu en puroffrit.
Seint Gabriel de sa main l'ad pris.
Desur sun bras teneit le chef enclin,
Juntes ses mains est alet à sa fin.
Deus i tramist sun angle cherubin,
Et seint Michel qu'on cleimet del péril
Ensemble ad els seint Gabriel i vint,
L'anme del cunte portent en pareis.

[1] Mon très-chier ami débonnaire,
Vous m'avez une chose ditte
Qui n'est pas à faire petite
Mais que l'on doit moult resongnier
Et nonpourquant, sans eslongnier,
Puisque garison autrement
Ne povez avoir vraiement,
Pour vostre amour les occiray,
Et le sang vous apporteray.

[2] Vraiz Diex, moult est excellente
Et de grant charité plaine,
Vostre bonté souveraine.
Car vostre grâce présente,
A toute personne humaine
Vraix Diex, moult est excellente,
Puisqu'elle a cuer et entente,
Et que à ce desir l'amaine
Que de vous servir se paine.

ad infinitum, without an outburst of emotion nor an accent of originality, flow like a clear and insipid stream, and send off their reader, by dint of their monotonous rhymes, into a comfortable slumber. What a deplorable abundance of distinct and facile ideas! We meet with it again in the seventeenth century, in the literary gossip which took place at the feet of men of distinction; it is the fault and the talent of the race. With this involuntary art of conceiving, and isolating instantaneously and clearly each part of every object, people can speak, even for speaking's sake, and for ever.

Such is the primitive process; how will it be continued? Here appears a new trait in the French genius, the most valuable of all. It is necessary to comprehension that the second idea shall be continuous with the first; otherwise that genius is thrown out of its course and arrested: it cannot proceed by irregular bounds; it must walk step by step, on a straight road; order is innate in it; without study, and at first approach, it disjoints and decomposes the object or event, however complicated and entangled it may be, and sets the parts one by one in succession to each other, according to their natural connection. True, it is still in a state of barbarism; yet intelligence is a reasoning faculty, which spreads, though unwittingly. Nothing is more clear than the style of the old French narrative and of the earliest poems: we do not perceive that we are following a narrator, so easy is the gait, so even the road he opens to us, so smoothly and gradually every idea glides into the next; and this is why he narrates so well. The chroniclers Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, the fathers of prose, have an ease and clearness approached by none, and beyond all, a charm, a grace, which they had not to go out of their way to find. Grace is a national possession in France, and springs from the native delicacy which has a horror of incongruities; the instinct of Frenchmen avoids violent shocks in works of taste as well as in works of argument; they desire that their sentiments and ideas shall harmonise, and not clash. Throughout they have this measured spirit, exquisitely refined.[1] They take care, on a sad subject, not to push emotion to its limits; they avoid big words. Think how Joinville relates in six lines the death of the poor sick priest who wished to finish celebrating the mass, and 'never more did sing, and died.' Open a mystery-play—*Théophile, the Queen of Hungary*, for instance: when they are going to burn her and her child, she says two short lines about 'this gentle dew which is so pure an innocent,' naught beside. Take a fabliau, even a dramatic one: when the penitent knight, who has undertaken to fill a barrel with his tears, dies in the hermit's company, he asks from him only one last gift: 'Do but put thy arms on me, and then I'll die embraced by thee.' Could a more touching sentiment be expressed in more sober language? One has to say of their poetry what is said of certain

[1] See H. Taine, *La Fontaine and his Fables* p. 15.

pictures: This is made out of nothing. Is there in the world anything more delicately graceful than the verses of Guillaume de Lorris? Allegory clothes his ideas so as to dim their too great brightness; ideal figures, half transparent, float about the lover, luminous, yet in a cloud, and lead him amidst all the sweets of delicate-hued ideas to the rose, of which 'the gentle odour embalms all the plain.' This refinement goes so far, that in Thibaut of Champagne and in Charles of Orléans it turns to affectation and insipidity. In them impressions grow more slender; the perfume is so weak, that one often fails to catch it; on their knees before their lady they whisper their waggeries and conceits; they love politely and wittily; they arrange ingeniously in a bouquet their 'painted words,' all the flowers of 'fresh and beautiful language;' they know how to mark fleeting ideas in their flight, soft melancholy, uncertain reverie; they are as elegant as eloquent, and as charming as the most amiable abbés of the eighteenth century. This lightness of touch is proper to the race, and appears as plainly under the armour and amid the massacres of the middle ages as amid the salutations and the musk-scented, wadded clothes of the last court. You will find it in their colouring as in their sentiments. They are not struck by the magnificence of nature, they see only her pretty side; they paint the beauty of a woman by a single feature, which is only polite, saying, 'She is more gracious than the rose in May.' They do not experience the terrible emotion, ravishment, sudden oppression of heart which is displayed in the poetry of neighbouring nations; they say directly, 'She began to smile, which vastly became her.' They add, when they are in a descriptive humour, 'that she had a sweet and perfumed breath,' and a body 'white as new-fallen snow on a branch.' They do not aspire higher; beauty pleases, but does not transport them. They delight in agreeable emotions, but are not fitted for deep sensations. The full rejuvenescence of being, the warm air of spring which renews and penetrates all existence, suggests but a pleasing couplet; they remark in passing, 'Now is winter gone, the hawthorn blossoms, the rose expands,' and so pass on about their business. It is a light pleasure, soon gone, like that which an April landscape affords. For an instant the author glances at the mist of the streams rising about the willow trees, the pleasant vapour which imprisons the brightness of the morning; then, humming a burden of a song, he returns to his narrative. He seeks amusement, and herein lies his power.

In life, as in literature, it is pleasure he aims at, not sensual pleasure or emotion. He is gay, not voluptuous; dainty, not a glutton. He takes love for a pastime, not for an intoxication. It is a pretty fruit which he plucks, tastes, and leaves. And we must remark yet further, that the best of the fruit in his eyes is the fact of its being forbidden. He says to himself that he is duping a husband, that 'he deceives a cruel woman, and thinks he ought to obtain

a pope's indulgence for the deed.'[1] He wishes to be merry—it is the state he prefers, the end and aim of his life; and especially to laugh at another's expense. The short verse of his fabliaux gambols and leaps like a schoolboy released from school, over all things respected or respectable; criticising the church, women, the great, the monks. Scoffers, banterers, our fathers have abundance of the same expressions and things; and the thing comes to them so naturally, that without culture, and surrounded by coarseness, they are as delicate in their raillery as the most refined. They touch upon ridicule lightly, they mock without emphasis, as it were innocently; their style is so harmonious, that at first sight we make a mistake, and do not see any harm in it. They seem artless; they look so very demure; only a word shows the imperceptible smile: it is the ass, for example, which they call the high priest, by reason of his padded cassock and his serious air, and who gravely begins 'to play the organ.' At the close of the history, the delicate sense of comicality has touched you, though you cannot say how. They do not call things by their name, especially in love matters; they let you guess it; they suppose you to be as sharp of intellect and as wary as themselves.[2] Be sure that one might discriminate, embellish at times, even refine upon them, but that their first traits are incomparable. When the fox approaches the raven to steal the cheese, he begins as a hypocrite, piously and cautiously, and as one of the family. He calls the raven his 'good father Don Robart, who sings so well;' he praises his voice, 'so sweet and fine.' 'You would be the best singer in the world if you beware of nuts.' Renard is a Scapin, an artist in the way of invention, not a mere glutton; he loves roguery for its own sake; he rejoices in his superiority, and draws out his mockery. When Tibert, the cat, by his counsel hung himself at the bell rope, wishing to ring it, he uses irony, smacks his lips and pretends to wax impatient against the poor fool whom he has caught, calls him proud, complains because the other does not answer, and because he wishes to rise to the clouds and visit the saints. And from beginning to end this long epic is the same; the raillery never ceases, and never fails to be agreeable. Renard has so much wit, that he is pardoned for everything. The necessity for laughter is national—so indigenous to the French, that a stranger cannot understand, and is shocked by it. This pleasure does not resemble physical joy in any respect, which is to be despised for its grossness; on the contrary, it sharpens the intelligence, and brings to light many a delicate and suggestive idea. The fabliaux are full of truths about men, and still more about women, about low conditions, and still more about high; it is

[1] La Fontaine, *Contes, Richard Minutolo.*

[2] Parler lui veut d'une besogne
Où crois que peu conquerréois
Si la besogne vous nommois.

a method of philosophising by stealth and boldly, in spite of conventionalism, and in opposition to the powers that be. This taste has nothing in common either with open satire, which is hideous because it is cruel; on the contrary, it provokes good humour. One soon sees that the jester is not ill-disposed, that he does not wish to wound: if he stings, it is as a bee, without venom; an instant later he is not thinking of it; if need be, he will take himself as an object of his pleasantry; all he wishes is to keep up in himself and in us sparkling and pleasing ideas. Do we not see here in advance an abstract of the whole French literature, the incapacity for great poetry, the quick and durable perfection of prose, the excellence of all the moods of conversation and eloquence, the reign and tyranny of taste and method, the art and theory of development and arrangement, the gift of being measured, clear, amusing, and pungent? We have taught Europe how ideas fall into order, and which ideas are agreeable; and this is what our Frenchmen of the eleventh century are about to teach their Saxons during five or six centuries, first with the lance, next with the stick, next with the birch.

IV.

Consider, then, this Frenchman or Norman, this man from Anjou or Maine, who in his well-closed coat of mail, with sword and lance, came to seek his fortune in England. He took the manor of some slain Saxon, and settled himself in it with his soldiers and comrades, gave them land, houses, the right of levying taxes, on condition of their fighting under him and for him, as men-at-arms, marshals, standard-bearers; it was a league in case of danger. In fact, they were in a hostile and conquered country, and they have to maintain themselves. Each one hastened to build for himself a place of refuge, castle or fortress,[1] well fortified, of solid stone, with narrow windows, strengthened with battlements, garrisoned by soldiers, pierced with loopholes. Then these men went to Salisbury, to the number of sixty thousand, all holders of land, having at least enough to support a complete horse or armour. There, placing their hands in William's, they promised him fealty and assistance; and the king's edict declared that they must be all united and bound together like brothers in arms, to defend and succour each other. They are an armed colony, and encamped in their dwellings, like the Spartans amongst the Helots; and they make laws accordingly. When a Frenchman is found dead in any district, the inhabitants are to give up the murderer, unless they pay forty-seven marks as compensation; if the dead man is English, it rests with the people of the place to prove it by the oath of four near relatives of the deceased. They are to beware of killing a stag, boar, or fawn; for an offence against the forest-laws they will lose their eyes. They have nothing of all their property assured

[1] At King Stephen's death there were 1115 castles.

to them except as alms, or on condition of tribute, or by taking the oath of homage. Here a free Saxon proprietor is made a body-slave on his own estate.[1] Here a noble and rich Saxon lady feels on her shoulder the weight of the hand of a Norman valet, who is become by force her husband or her lover. There were Saxons of one sou, or of two sous, according to the sum which they brought to their masters; they sold them, hired them, worked them on joint account, like an ox or an ass. One Norman abbot has his Saxon predecessors dug up, and their bones thrown without the gates. Another keeps men-at-arms, who reduce the recalcitrant monks to reason by blows of their swords. Imagine, if you can, the pride of these new lords, conquerors, strangers, masters, nourished by habits of violent activity, and by the savagery, ignorance, and passions of feudal life. 'They thought they might do whatsoever they pleased,' say the old chroniclers. 'They shed blood indiscriminately, snatched the morsel of bread from the mouth of the wretched, and seized upon all the money, the goods, the land.'[2] Thus 'all the folk in the low country were at great pains to seem humble before Ives Taillebois, and only to address him with one knee on the ground; but although they made a point of paying him every honour, and giving him all and more than all which they owed him in the way of rent and service, he harassed, tormented, tortured, imprisoned them, set his dogs upon their cattle, . . . broke the legs and backbones of their beasts of burden, . . . and sent men to attack their servants on the road with sticks and swords.' The Normans would not and could not borrow any idea or custom from such boors;[3] they despised them as coarse and stupid. They stood amongst them, as the Spaniards amongst the Americans in the sixteenth century, superior in force and culture, more versed in letters, more expert in the arts of luxury. They preserved their manners and their speech. England, to all outward appearance—the court of the king, the castles of the nobles, the palaces of the bishops, the houses of the wealthy—was French; and the Scandinavian people, of whom sixty years ago the Saxon kings used to have poems sung to them, thought that the nation had forgotten its language, and treated it in their laws as though it were no longer their sister.

It was then a French literature which was at this time domiciled across the Channel,[4] and the conquerors tried to make it purely French, purged from all Saxon alloy. They made such a point of this, that the nobles in the reign of Henry II. sent their sons to France, to pre-

[1] A. Thierry, *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre*, ii.

[2] William of Malmesbury. A. Thierry, ii. 20, 122–203.

[3] 'In the year 652,' says Warton, i. 3, 'it was the common practice of the Anglo-Saxons to send their youth to the monasteries of France for education; and not only the language but the manners of the French were esteemed the most polite accomplishments.'

[4] Warton, i. 5.

serve them from barbarisms. 'For two hundred years,' says Higden,[1] 'children in scole, agenst the usage and manir of all other nations beeth compelled for to leve hire own langage, and for to construe hir lessons and hire thynges in Frensche.' The statutes of the universities obliged the students to converse either in French or Latin. 'Gentilmen children beeth taught to speke Frensche from the tyme that they bith rokked in hire cradell; and uplondissche men will likne himself to gentylmen, and fondeth with greet besynesse for to speke Frensche.' Of course the poetry is French. The Norman brought his minstrel with him; there was Taillefer, the *jongleur*, who sang the *Song of Roland* at the battle of Hastings; there was Adeline, the *jongleuse*, who received an estate in the partition which followed the Conquest. The Norman who ridiculed the Saxon kings, who dug up the Saxon saints, and cast them without the walls of the church, loved none but French ideas and verses. It was into French verse that Robert Wace rendered the legendary history of the England which was conquered, and the actual history of the Normandy in which he continued to live. Enter one of the abbeys where the minstrels come to sing, 'where the clerks after dinner and supper read poems, the chronicles of kingdoms, the wonders of the world,'[2] you will only find Latin or French verses, Latin or French prose. What becomes of English? Obscure, despised, we hear it no more, except in the mouths of degraded franklins, outlaws of the forest, swineherds, peasants, the lowest orders. It is no longer, or scarcely written; gradually we find in the Saxon chronicle that the idiom alters, is extinguished; the chronicle itself ceases within a century after the Conquest.[3] The people who have leisure or security enough to read or write are French; for them authors devise and compose; literature always adapts itself to the taste of those who can appreciate and pay for it. Even the English[4] endeavour to write in French: thus Robert Grostête, in his allegorical poem on Christ; Peter Langtoft, in his *Chronicle of England*, and in his *Life of Thomas à Becket;* Hugh de Rotheland, in his poem of *Hippomedon;* John Hoveden, and many others. Several write the first half of the verse in English, and the second in French; a strange sign of the ascendency which is moulding and oppressing them. Still, in the fifteenth century,[5] many of these poor folk are employed in this task; French is the language of the court, from it arose all poetry and elegance; he is

[1] Trevisa's translation of the *Polycronycon.*

[2] Statutes of foundation of New College, Oxford. In the abbey of Glastonbury, in 1247: *Liber de excidio Trojæ, gesta Ricardi regis, gesta Alexandri Magni, etc.* In the abbey of Peterborough: *Amys et Amelion, Sir Tristam, Guy de Bourgogne, gesta Otuclis, les prophéties de Merlin, le Charlemagne de Turpin, la destruction de Troie, etc.* Warton, *ibidem.*

[3] In 1154.

[4] Warton, i. 72–78.

[5] In 1400. Warton, ii. 248. Gower died in 1408; his French ballads belong to the end of the fourteenth century.

but a clodhopper who is inapt at that style. They apply themselves to it as our old writers did to Latin verses; they are gallicised as those were latinised, by constraint, with a sort of fear, knowing well that they are but scholars and provincials. Gower, one of their best poets, at the end of his French works, excuses himself humbly for not having 'de Français la faconde. Pardonnez moi,' he says, 'que de ce je forsvoie; je suis Anglais.'

And yet, after all, neither the race nor the tongue has perished. It is necessary that the Norman should learn English, in order to command his serfs; his Saxon wife speaks it to him, and his sons receive it from the lips of their nurse; the contagion is strong, for he is obliged to send them to France, to preserve them from the jargon which on his domain threatens to overwhelm and spoil them. From generation to generation the contagion spreads; they breathe it in the air, with the foresters in the chase, the farmers in the field, the sailors on the ships: for these rough people, shut in by their animal existence, are not the kind to learn a foreign language; by the simple weight of their dulness they impose their idiom, at all events such as pertains to living terms. Scholarly speech, the language of law, abstract and philosophical expressions,—in short, all words depending on reflection and culture may be French, since there is nothing to prevent it. This is just what happens; these kind of ideas and this kind of speech are not understood by the commonalty, who, not being able to touch them, cannot change them. This produces a French, a colonial French, doubtless perverted, pronounced with closed mouth, with a contortion of the organs of speech, 'after the school of Stratford-atte-Bow;' yet it is still French. On the other hand, as regards the speech employed about common actions and sensible objects, it is the people, the Saxons, who fix it; these living words are too firmly rooted in his experience to allow of his removing them, and thus the whole substance of the language comes from him. Here, then, we have the Norman who, slowly and constrainedly, speaks and understands English, a deformed, gallicised English, yet English, vigorous and original; but he has taken his time about it, for it has required two centuries. It was only under Henry III. that the new tongue is complete, with the new constitution, and that, after the like fashion, by alliance and intermixture; the burgesses come to take their seats in Parliament with the nobles, at the same time that Saxon words settle down in the language side by side with French words.

V.

So was modern English formed, by compromise, and the necessity of being understood. But one can well imagine that these nobles, even while speaking the growing dialect, have their hearts full of French tastes and ideas; France remains the land of their genius, and the literature which now begins, is but translation. Translators, copyists,

imitators—there is nothing else. England is a distant province, which is to France what the United States were, thirty years ago, to Europe: she exports her wool, and imports her ideas. Open the *Voyage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville*,[1] the oldest prose-writer, the Villehardouin of the country: his book is but the translation of a translation.[2] He writes first in Latin, the language of scholars; then in French, the language of society; finally he reflects, and discovers that the barons, his compatriots, by governing the rustic Saxons, have ceased to speak their own Norman, and that the rest of the nation never knew it; he translates his book into English, and, in addition, takes care to make it plain, feeling that he speaks to less expanded understandings. He says in French:

'Il advint une fois que Mahomet allait dans une chapelle où il y avait un saint ermite. Il entra en la chapelle où il y avait une petite huisserie et basse, et était bien petite la chapelle; et alors devint la porte si grande qu'il semblait que ce fut la porte d'un palais.'

He stops, recollects himself, wishes to explain himself better for his readers across the Channel, and says in English:

'And at the Desertes of Arabye, he wente in to a Chapelle where a Eremyte duelte. And whan he entred in to the Chapelle that was but a lytille and a low thing, and had but a lytill Dore and a low, than the Entree began to wexe so gret and so large, and so highe, as though it had ben of a gret Mynstre, or the Zate of a Paleys.'[3]

You perceive that he amplifies, and thinks himself bound to clinch and drive in three or four times in succession the same idea, in order to get it into an English brain; his thought is drawn out, dulled, spoiled in the process. So that, being all a copy, the new literature is mediocre, and repeats that which went before, with fewer merits and greater faults.

Let us see, then, what our Norman baron gets translated for him: first, the chronicles of Geoffroy Gaimar and Robert Wace, which con-

[1] He wrote in 1356, and died in 1372.

[2] 'And for als moche as it is longe time passed that ther was no generalle Passage ne Vyage over the See, and many Men desiren for to here speke of the holy Lond, and han thereof gret Solace and Comfort, I, John Maundevylle, Knyght, alle be it I be not worthi, that was born in Englond, in the town of Seynt-Albones, passed the See in the Zeer of our Lord Jesu-Crist 1322, in the Day of Seynt Michelle, and hidreto have been longe tyme over the See, and have seyn and gon thorghe manye dyverse londes, and many Provynces, and Kingdomes, and Iles.

'And zee shulle undirstonde that I have put this Boke out of Latyn into Frensche, and translated it azen out of Frensche into Englyssche, that every Man of my Nacioun may undirstonde it.'—*Sir John Maundeville's Voyage and Travaile*, ed. Halliwell, 1866, prologue, p. 4.

[3] *Ibid.* xii. p. 139. It is confessed that the original on which Wace depended for his ancient *History of England* is the Latin compilation of Geoffrey of Monmouth

sist of the fabulous history of England continued up to their day, a dull-rhymed rhapsody, turned into English in a rhapsody no less dull. The first Englishman who attempts it is Layamon,[1] a monk of Ernely, still fettered in the old idiom, who sometimes happens to rhyme, sometimes fails, altogether barbarous and childish, unable to develop a continuous idea, babbling in little confused and incomplete phrases, after the fashion of the ancient Saxon; after him a monk, Robert of Gloucester, and a canon, Robert of Brunne, both as insipid and clear as their French models, having become gallicised, and adopted the significant characteristic of the race, namely, the faculty and habit of easy narration, and seeing moving spectacles without deep emotion, of writing prosaic poetry, of discoursing and developing, of believing that phrases ending in the same sounds form real poetry. Our honest English versifiers, like their preceptors in Normandy and Ile-de-France, garnished with rhymes their dissertations and histories, and called them poems. At this epoch, in fact, on the Continent, the whole learning of the schools descends into the street; and Jean de Meung, in his poem

[1] Extract from the account of the proceedings at Arthur's coronation given by Layamon, in his translation of Wace, executed about 1180. Madden's *Layamon*, 1847, ii. p. 625, *et passim*:

Tha the king igeten hafde
And al his mon-weorede,
Tha bugen ut of burhge
Theines swithe balde.
Alle tha kinges,
And heore here-thringes.
Alle tha biscopes,
And alle tha clærckes,
All the eorles,
And alle tha beornes.
Alle tha theines,
Alle the sweines,
Feire iscrudde,
Helde geond felde.
Summe heo gunnen ærnen,
Summe heo gunnen urnen,
Summe heo gunnen lepen,
Summe heo gunnen sceoten,
Summe heo wræstleden
And wither-gome makeden,
Summe heo on uelde
Pleouweden under scelde,
Summe heo driven balles
Wide geond tha feldes.
Monianes kunnes gomen
Ther heo gunnen driuen.
And wha swa mihte iwinne
Wurthscipe of his gomene.

of *la Rose*, is the most tedious of doctors. So in England, Robert of Brunne transposes into verse the *Manuel des Péchés* of Bishop Grostête; Adam Davie,[1] certain Scripture histories; Hampole[2] composes the *Pricke of Conscience*. The titles alone make one yawn; what of the text?

'Mankynde mad ys to do Goddus wylle,
And alle Hys byddyngus to fulfille;
For of al Hys makyng more and les,
Man most principal creature es.
Al that He made for man hit was done,
As ye schal here after sone.'[3]

There is a poem! You did not think so; call it a sermon, if you will give it its proper name. It goes on, well divided, well prolonged, flowing and hollow; the literature which contains and resembles it bears witness of its origin by its loquacity and its clearness.

It bears witness to it by other and more agreeable features. Here and there we find divergences more or less awkward into the domain of genius; for instance, a ballad full of quips against Richard, King of the Romans, who was taken at the battle of Lewes. Moreover, charm is not lacking, nor sweetness either. No one has ever spoken so lively and so well to the ladies as the French of the Continent, and they have not quite forgotten this talent while settling in England. You perceive it readily in the manner in which they celebrate the Virgin. Nothing could be more different from the Saxon sentiment, which is altogether biblical, than the chivalric adoration of the sovereign Lady, the fascinating Virgin and Saint, who was the real deity of the middle ages. It breathes in this pleasing hymn:

Hine me ladde mid songe
At foren than leod kinge;
And the king, for his gomene,
Gaf him geven gode.
Alle tha quene
The icumen weoren there,
And alle tha lafdies,
Leoneden geond walles,
To bihalden the dugethen,
And that folc plæie.
This ilæste threo dæges,
Swulc gomes and swulc plæges,
Tha, at than veorthe dæie
The king gon to spekene
And agæf his goden cnihten
All heore rihten;
He gef seolver, he gæf gold,
He gef hors, he gef lond,
Castles, and cloethes eke;
His monnen he iquende.

[1] About 1312. [2] About 1349 Warton, ii. 38.

'Blessed beo thu, lavedi,
Ful of hovene blisse;
Swete flur of parais,
Moder of milternisse. . . .
I-blessed beo thu, Lavedi,
So fair and so briht;
Al min hope is uppon the,
Bi day and bi nicht. . . .
Bricht and scene quen of storre,
So me liht and lere.
In this false fikele world,
So me led and steore.'[1]

There is but a short and easy step between this tender worship of the Virgin and the sentiments of the court of love. The English rhymesters take it; and when they wish to praise their earthly mistresses, they borrow, here as elsewhere, our ideas and very form of verse. One compares his lady to all kinds of precious stones and flowers; others sing truly amorous songs, at times sensual:

'Bytuene Mershe and Aueril,
When spray biginneth to springe,
The lutel foul hath hire wyl
On hyre lud to synge,
Ich libbe in loue longinge
For semlokest of alle thynge.
He may me blysse bringe,
Icham in hire baundoun.
An hendy hap ich abbe yhent,
Ichot from heuene it is me sent.
From all wymmen my love is lent,
And lyht on Alysoun.'[2]

Another sings:

'Suete lemmon, y preye the, of loue one speche,
Whil y lyue in world so wyde other nulle y seche.
With thy loue, my suete leof, mi bliss thou mihtes eche
A suete cos of thy mouth mihte be my leche.'[3]

Is not this the lively and warm imagination of the south? They speak of springtime and of love, 'the fine and lovely weather,' like *trouvères*, even like *troubadours*. The dirty, smoke-grimed cottage, the black feudal castle, where all but the master lie higgledy-piggledy on the straw in the great stone hall, the cold rain, the muddy earth, make the return of the sun and the warm air delicious.

'Sumer is i-cumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu:

[1] Time of Henry III., *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, edited by Messrs. Wright and Halliwell, i. 102.

[2] About 1278. Warton, i. 28.

[3] *Ibid*, i. 31

Groweth sed, and bloweth med,
And springeth the wde nu.
Sing cuccu, cuccu.
Awe bleteth after lomb,
Llouth after calue cu,
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth:
Murie sing cuccu,
Cuccu, cuccu.
Wel singes thu cuccu;
Ne swik thu nauer nu.
Sing, cuccu nu,
Sing, cuccu.[1]

Here are glowing pictures, such as Guillaume de Lorris was writing at the same time, even richer and more lively, perhaps because the poet found here for inspiration that love of country life which in England is deep and national. Others, more imitative, attempt pleasantries like those of Rutebeuf and the fabliaux, frank quips,[2] and even satirical, loose waggeries. Their true aim and end is to hit out at the monks. In every French country, or country which imitates France, the most manifest use of convents is to furnish material for sprightly and scandalous stories. One writes, for instance, of the kind of life they live at the abbey of Cocagne:

'There is a wel fair abbei,
Of white monkes and of grei.
Ther beth bowris and halles:
Al of pasteiis beth the wallis,
Of fleis, of fisse, and rich met,
The likfullist that man may et.
Fluren cakes beth the schingles alle,
Of cherche, cloister, boure, and halle.
The pinnes beth fat podinges
Rich met to princes and kinges. . . .
Though paradis be miri and bright
Cokaign is of fairir sight. . . .
Another abbei is ther bi,
Forsoth a gret fair nunnerie. . . .
When the someris dai is hote
The young nunnes takith a bote . . .
And doth ham forth in that river
Both with ores and with stere. . . .
And each monk him takes on,
And snelliche berrith forth har prei
To the mochil grei abbei,
And techith the nunnes an oreisun,
With iamblene up and down.'

[1] Warton, i. 30.

[2] *Poem of the Owl and Nightingale*, who dispute as to which has the finest voice.

This is the triumph of gluttony and feeding. Moreover many things could be mentioned in the middle ages, which are now unmentionable.

But it was the poems of chivalry, which represented to him in fair language his own mode of life, that the baron preferred to have translated. He desired that his *trouvère* should set before his eyes the magnificence which he has spread around him, and the luxury and enjoyments which he has introduced from France. Life at that time, without and even during war, was a great pageant, a brilliant and tumultuous kind of fête. When Henry II. travelled, he took with him a great number of knights, foot-soldiers, baggage-waggons, tents, war-horses, comedians, courtesans, and their overseers, cooks, confectioners, posture-makers, dancers, barbers, go-betweens, hangers-on.[1] In the morning when they start, the assemblage begins to shout, sing, hustle each other, make racket and rout, 'as if hell were let loose.' William Longchamps, even in time of peace, would not travel without a thousand horses by way of escort. When Archbishop à Becket came to France, he entered the town with two hundred knights, a number of barons and nobles, and an army of servants, all richly armed and equipped, he himself being provided with four-and-twenty suits; two hundred and fifty children walked in front, singing national songs; then dogs, then carriages, then a dozen war-horses, each ridden by an ape and a man; then equerries, with shields and horses; then more equerries, falconers, a suite of domestics, knights, priests; lastly, the archbishop himself, with his particular friends. Imagine these processions, and also these entertainments; for the Normans, after the Conquest, 'borrowed from the Saxons the habit of excess in eating and drinking.'[2] At the marriage of Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cornwall, they provided thirty thousand dishes.[3] Add to this, that they still continued to be gallant, and punctiliously performed the great precept of the love courts; be assured that in the middle age the sense of love was no more idle than the others. Mark also that tourneys were plentiful; a sort of opera prepared for their own entertainment. So ran their life, full of adventure and adornment, in the open air and in the sunlight, with show of cavalcades and arms; they act a pageant, and act it with enjoyment. Thus the King of Scots, having come to London with a hundred knights, at the coronation of Edward I., they all dismounted, and made over their horses and superb caparisons to the people; as did also five English lords, emulating their example. In

[1] Letter of Peter of Blois.

[2] William of Malmesbury.

[3] At the installation-feast of George Nevill, Archbishop of York, the brother of Guy of Warwick, there were consumed, 104 oxen and 6 wild bulls, 1000 sheep, 304 calves, as many hogs, 2000 swine, 500 stags, bucks, and does, 204 kids, 22,802 wild or tame fowl, 300 quarters of corn, 300 tuns of ale, 100 of wine, a pipe of hypocras, 12 porpoises and seals.

the midst of war they took their pleasure. Edward III., in one of his expeditions against the King of France, took with him thirty falconers, and made his campaign alternately hunting and fighting.[1] Another time, says Froissart, the knights who joined the army carried a plaster over one eye, having vowed not to remove it until they had performed an exploit worthy of their mistresses. Out of the very exuberancy of genius they practised the art of poetry; out of the buoyancy of their imagination they made a sport of life. Edward III. built at Windsor a round hall and a round table; and in one of his tourneys in London, sixty ladies, seated on palfreys, led, as in a fairy tale, each her knight by a golden chain. Was not this the triumph of the gallant and frivolous French fashions? His wife Philippa sat as a model to the artists for their Madonnas. She appeared on the field of battle; listened to Froissart, who provided her with moral-plays, love-stories, and 'things fair to listen to.' At once goddess, heroine, and scholar, and all this so agreeably, was she not a true queen of polite chivalry? Now, as in France under Louis of Orleans and the Dukes of Burgundy, the most elegant flower of this romanesque civilisation appeared, void of common sense, given up to passion, bent on pleasure, immoral and brilliant, but, like its neighbours of Italy and Provence, for lack of serious intention, it could not last.

Of all these marvels the narrators make display in their accounts. Follow this picture of the vessel which takes the mother of King Richard into England:—

'Swlk on ne seygh they never non;
All it was whyt of huel-bon,
And every nayl with gold begrave:
Off pure gold was the stave.
Her mast was of yvory;
Off samyte the sayl wytterly.
Her ropes wer off tuely sylk,
Al so whyt as ony mylk.
That noble schyp was al withoute,
With clothys of golde sprede aboute;
And her loof and her wyndas,
Off assure forsothe it was.'[2]

On such subjects they never run dry. When the King of Hungary wishes to console his afflicted daughter, he proposes to take her to the chase in the following style:—

'To-morrow ye shall in hunting fare;
And yede, my daughter, in a chair;

[1] These prodigalities and refinements grew to excess under his grandson Richard II.

[2] Warton, i. 156.

It shall be covered with velvet red.
And cloths of fine gold all about your head
With damask white and azure blue,
Well diapered with lilies new.
Your pommels shall be ended with gold,
Your chains enamelled many a fold,
Your mantle of rich degree,
Purple pall and ermine free.
Jennets of Spain that ben so light,
Trapped to the ground with velvet bright.
Ye shall have harp, sautry, and song,
And other mirths you among.
Ye shall have Rumney and Malespine,
Both hippocras and Vernage wine;
Montrese and wine of Greek,
Both Algrade and despice eke,
Antioch and Bastarde,
Pyment also and garnarde;
Wine of Greek and Muscadel,
Both clare, pyment, and Rochelle,
The reed your stomach to defy,
And pots of osey set you by.
You shall have venison ybake,
The best wild fowl that may be take;
A leish of harehound with you to streck,
And hart, and hind, and other like.
Ye shall be set at such a tryst,
That hart and hynd shall come to you fist,
Your disease to drive you fro,
To hear the bugles there yblow.
Homeward thus shall ye ride,
On hawking by the river's side,
With gosshawk and with gentle falcon,
With bugle-horn and merlion.
When you come home your menie among,
Ye shall have revel, dance, and song;
Little children, great and small,
Shall sing as does the nightingale.
Then shall ye go to your evensong,
With tenors and trebles among.
Threescore of copes of damask bright,
Full of pearls they shall be pight.
Your censors shall be of gold,
Indent with azure many a fold;
Your quire nor organ song shall want,
With contre-note and descant.
The other half on organs playing,
With young children full fain singing.
Then shall ye go to your supper,
And sit in tents in green arber,
With cloth of arras pight to the ground,
With sapphires set of diamond.

A hundred knights truly told,
Shall play with bowls in alleys cold,
Your disease to drive away;
To see the fishes in pools play,
To a drawbridge then shall ye,
Th' one half of stone, th' other of tree;
A barge shall meet you full right,
With twenty-four oars full bright,
With trumpets and with clarion,
The fresh water to row up and down. . . .
Forty torches burning bright
At your bridge to bring you light.
Into your chamber they shall you bring,
With much mirth and more liking.
Your blankets shall be of fustian,
Your sheets shall be of cloth of Rennes.
Your head sheet shall be of pery pight,
With diamonds set and rubies bright.
When you are laid in bed so soft,
A cage of gold shall hang aloft,
With long paper fair burning,
And cloves that be sweet smelling.
Frankincense and olibanum,
That when ye sleep the taste may come;
And if ye no rest can take,
All night minstrels for you shall wake.'[1]

Amid such fancies and splendours the poets delight and lose themselves; and the result, like the embroideries of their canvas, bears the mark of this love of decoration. They weave it out of adventures, of extraordinary and surprising events. Now it is the life of King Horn, who, thrown into a vessel when quite young, is driven upon the coast of England, and, becoming a knight, reconquers the kingdom of his father. Now it is the history of Sir Guy, who rescues enchanted knights, cuts down the giant Colbrand, challenges and kills the Sultan in his tent. It is not for me to recount these poems, which are not English, but only translations; still, here as in France, they are multiplied, they fill the imaginations of the young society, and they grow by exaggeration, until, falling to the lowest depth of insipidity and improbability, they are buried for ever by Cervantes. What would you say of a society which had no literature but the opera with its unrealities? Yet it was a literature of this kind which nourished the genius of the middle ages. They did not ask for truth, but entertainment, and that vehement and hollow, full of glare and startling events. They asked for impossible voyages, extravagant challenges, a racket of contests, a confusion of magnificence and entanglement of chances. For introspective history they had no liking, cared nothing for the adventures of the heart, devoted their attention to the outside. They lived like

[1] Warton, i. 176, spelling modernised.

children, with eyes glued to a series of exaggerated and coloured images, and, for lack of thinking, did not perceive that they had learnt nothing.

What was there beneath this fanciful dream? Brutal and evil human passions, unchained at first by religious fury, then delivered to their own devices, and, beneath a show of external courtesy, as vile as before. Look at the popular king, Richard Cœur de Lion, and reckon up his butcheries and murders: 'King Richard,' says a poem, 'is the best king ever mentioned in song.'[1] I have no objection; but if he has the heart of a lion, he has also that brute's appetite. One day, under the walls of Acre, being convalescent, he had a great desire for some pork. There was no pork. They killed a young Saracen, fresh and tender, cooked and salted him, and the king eat him and found him very good; whereupon he desired to see the head of the pig. The cook brought it in trembling. The king falls a laughing, and says the army has nothing to fear from famine, having provisions ready at hand. He takes the town, and presently Saladin's ambassadors come to sue for pardon for the prisoners. Richard has thirty of the most noble beheaded, and bids his cook boil the heads, and serve one to each ambassador, with a ticket bearing the name and family of the dead man. Meanwhile, in their presence, he eats his own with a relish, bids them tell Saladin how the Christians make war, and ask him if it is true that they feared him. Then he orders the sixty thousand prisoners to be led into the plain:

> 'They were led into the place full even.
> There they heard angels of heaven;
> They said: "Seigneures, tuez, tuez!
> Spares hem nought, and beheadeth these!"
> King Richard heard the angels' voice,
> And thanked God and the holy cross.'

Thereon they behead them all. When he took a town, it was his wont to murder every one, even children and women. That was the devotion of the middle ages, not only in romances, as here, but in history. At the taking of Jerusalem the whole population, seventy thousand persons, were massacred.

Thus even in chivalrous accounts break out the fierce and unbridled instincts of the bloodthirsty brute. The authentic narratives show it equally. Henry II., irritated against a page, attempted to tear out his eyes.[2] John Lackland let twenty-three hostages die in prison of hunger. Edward II. caused at one time twenty-eight nobles to be hanged and disembowelled, and was himself put to death by the inser-

[1] Warton, i. 123:

> 'In Fraunce these rhymes were wroht,
> Every Englyshe ne knew it not.'

[2] See Lingard's *History*, ii. 55, note 4.—Tr.

tion of a red-hot iron into his bowels. Look in Froissart for the debaucheries and murders, in France as well as in England, of the Hundred Years' War, and then for the slaughters of the Wars of the Roses. In both countries feudal independence ended in civil war, and the middle age founders under its vices. Chivalrous courtesy, which cloaked the native ferocity, disappears like a garment suddenly consumed by the breaking out of a fire; at that time in England they killed nobles in preference, and prisoners too, even children, with insults, in cold blood. What, then, did man learn in this civilisation and by this literature? How was he humanised? What precepts of justice, habits of reflection, store of true judgments, did this culture interpose between his desires and his actions, in order to moderate his passion? He dreamed, he imagined a sort of elegant ceremonial in order to address better lords and ladies; he discovered the gallant code of little Jehan de Saintré. But where is the true education? Wherein has Froissart profited by all his vast experience? He was a fine specimen of a babbling child; what they called his poesy, the *poésie neuve*, is only a refined gabble, a senile puerility. Some rhetoricians, like Christine de Pisan, try to round their periods after an ancient model; but their literature amounts to nothing. No one can think. Sir John Maundeville, who travelled all over the world a hundred and fifty years after Villehardouin, is as contracted in his ideas as Villehardouin himself. Extraordinary legends and fables, every sort of credulity and ignorance, abound in his book. When he wishes to explain why Palestine has passed into the hands of various possessors instead of continuing under one government, he says that it is because God would not that it should continue longer in the hands of traitors and sinners, whether Christians or others. He has seen at Jerusalem, on the steps of the temple, the footmarks of the ass which our Lord rode on Palm Sunday. He describes the Ethiopians as a people who have only one foot, but so large that they can make use of it as a parasol. He instances one island 'where be people as big as gyants, of 28 feet long, and have no cloathing but beasts' skins;' then another island, 'where there are many evil and foul women, but have precious stones in their eyes, and have such force that if they behold any man with wrath, they slay him with beholding, as the basilisk doth.' The good man relates; that is all: hesitation and good sense scarcely exist in the world he lives in. He has neither judgment nor personal reflection; he piles facts one on top of another, with no further connection; his book is simply a mirror which reproduces recollections of his eyes and ears. 'And all those who will say a Pater and an Ave Maria in my behalf, I give them an interest and a share in all the holy pilgrimages I ever made in my life.' That is his farewell, and accords with all the rest. Neither public morality nor public knowledge has gained anything from these three centuries of culture. This French culture, copied in vain throughout Europe, has but superficially adorned mankind, and the varnish with

which it decked them, already fades away or scales off. It was worse in England, where the thing was more superficial and the application worse than in France, where strange hands daubed it on, and where it only half-covered the Saxon crust, which remained coarse and rough. That is the reason why, during three centuries, throughout the first feudal age, the literature of the Normans in England, made up of imitations, translations, and clumsy copies, ends in nothing.

VI.

Meantime, what has become of the conquered people? Has the old stock on which the brilliant continental flowers were grafted, engendered no shoot of its own speciality? Did it continue barren during this time under the Norman axe, which stripped it of all its shoots? It grew very feebly, but it grew nevertheless. The subjugated race is not a dismembered nation, dislocated, uprooted, sluggish, like the populations of the Continent, which, after the long Roman oppression, were delivered over to the disorderly invasion of barbarians; it remained united, fixed in its own soil, full of sap: its members were not displaced; it was simply lopped in order to receive on its crown a cluster of foreign branches. True, it had suffered, but at last the wound closed, the saps mingled.[1] Even the hard, stiff ligatures with which the Conqueror bound it, henceforth contributed to its fixity and vigour. The land was mapped out; every title verified, defined in writing;[2] every right or tenure valued; every man registered as to his locality, condition, duty, resources, worth, so that the whole nation was enveloped in a network of which not a mesh would break. Its future development was according to this pattern. Its constitution was settled, and in this determinate and stringent enclosure men were bound to unfold themselves and to act. Solidarity and strife: these were the two effects of the great and orderly establishment which shaped and held together, on one side the aristocracy of the conquerors, on the other the conquered people; even as in Rome the systematic importation of conquered peoples into the plebs, and the constrained organisation of the patricians in contrast with the plebs, enrolled the several elements in two orders, whose opposition and union formed the state. Thus, here as in Rome, the national character was moulded and completed by the habit of corporate action, the respect for written law, political and practical aptitude, the development of combative and patient energy. It was the Domesday Book which, binding this young

[1] *Pictorial History*, i. 666; Dialogue on the Exchequer, temp. Henr. II.

[2] Domesday Book. Froude's *Hist. of England*, 1858, i. 13: 'Through all these arrangements a single aim is visible, that every man in England should have his definite place and definite duty assigned to him, and that no human being should be at liberty to lead at his own pleasure an unaccountable existence. The discipline of an army was transferred to the details of social life.'

society in a rigid discipline, made of the Saxon the Englishman we see in our own day.

Gradually and slowly, through the gloomy complainings of the chroniclers, we find the new man fashioned by action, like a child who cries because a steel instrument, though it improves his figure, gives him pain. However reduced and downtrodden the Saxons were, they did not all sink into the populace. Some,[1] almost in every county, remained lords of their estates, if they would do homage for them to the king. A great number became vassals of Norman barons, and remained proprietors on this condition. A greater number became socagers, that is, free proprietors, burdened with a tax, but possessed of the right of alienating their property; and the Saxon villeins found patrons in these, as the plebs formerly did in the Italian nobles who were transplanted to Rome. It was an effectual patronage, that of the Saxons who preserved their integral position, for they were not isolated: marriages from the first united the two races, as it had the patricians and plebeians of Rome;[2] a Norman, brother-in-law to a Saxon, defended himself in defending him. In those troublesome times, and in an armed community, relatives and allies were obliged to stand close to one another for security. After all, it was necessary for the new-comers to consider their subjects, for these subjects had the heart and courage of a man. the Saxons, like the plebeians at Rome, remembered their native rank and their original independence. We can recognise it in the complaints and indignation of the chroniclers, in the growling and menaces of popular revolt, in the long bitterness with which they continually recalled their ancient liberty, in the favour with which they cherished the daring and rebellion of the outlaws. There were Saxon families at the end of the twelfth century, who had bound themselves by a perpetual vow, to wear long beards from father to son, in memory of the national custom and of the old country. Such men, even though fallen to the condition of socagers, even sunk into villeins, had a stiffer neck than the wretched colonists of the Continent, trodden down and moulded by four centuries of Roman taxation. By their feelings as by their condition, they were the broken remains, but also the living elements of a free people. They did not suffer the limits of oppression. They constitute the body of the nation, the laborious, courageous body which supplied its energy. The great barons felt that they must rely

[1] Domesday Book, 'tenants-in-chief.'

[2] *Pict. Hist.* i. 666. According to Ailred (temp. Hen. II.), 'a king, many bishops and abbots, many great earls and noble knights, descended both from English and Norman blood, constituted a support to the one and an honour to the other.' 'At present,' says another author of the same period, 'as the English and Normans dwell together, and have constantly intermarried, the two nations are so completely mingled together, that, at least as regards freemen, one can scarcely distinguish who is Norman, and who English. . . . The villeins attached to the soil,' he says again, 'are alone of pure Saxon blood.'

upon them in their resistance to the king. Very soon, in stipulating for themselves, they stipulated for all freemen,[1] even for the merchants and villeins. Thereafter

'No merchant shall be dispossessed of his merchandise, no villein of the instruments of his labour; no freeman, merchant, or villein shall be taxed unreasonably for a small crime; no freeman shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or disseised of his land, or outlawed, or destroyed in any manner, but by the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.'

The red-bearded Saxon, with his clear complexion and great white teeth, came and sate by the Norman's side; these were franklins like the one whom Chaucer describes:

'A Frankelein was in this compagnie;
White was his berd, as is the dayesie.
Of his complexion he was sanguin,
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in win.
To liven in delit was ever his wone,
For he was Epicures owen sone,
That held opinion that plein delit
Was verraily felicite parfite.
An housholder, and that a grete was he,
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His brede, his ale, was alway after on;
A better envyned man was no wher non.
Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of all deintees that men coud of thinke;
After the sondry sesons of the yere,
So changed he his mete and his soupere.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a breme, and many a luce in stewe,
Wo was his coke but if his sauce were
Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere.
His table, dormant in his halle alway
Stode redy covered alle the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful often time he was knight of the shire.
An anelace and a gipciere all of silk,
Heng at his girdel, white as morwe milk.
A shereve hadde he ben, and a contour.
Was no wher swiche a worthy vavasour.'[2]

With him occasionally in the assembly, oftenest among the audience, were the yeomen, farmers, foresters, tradesmen, his fellow-countrymen, muscular and resolute men, not slow in the defence of their property, and in the support, with voice, blows, and weapons, of him who would

[1] Magna Charta, 1215.

[2] *Chaucer's Works*, ed. Sir H. Nicholas, 6 vols., 1845, *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. ii. p. 11, *v.* 333.

take their cause in hand. Is it likely that the discontent of such men could be overlooked?

'The Miller was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones;
That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
At wrastling he wold bere away the ram.
He was short shuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,
And therto brode, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A wert, and theron stode a tufte of heres,
Rede as the bristles of a sowes eres:
His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.
A swerd and bokeler bare he by his side.
His mouth as wide was as a forneis,
He was a jangler and a goliardeis,
And that was most of sinne, and harlotries.
Wel conde he stelen corne and tollen thries.
And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
A baggepipe wel conde he blowe and soune,
And therwithall he brought us out of toune.'[1]

Those are the athletic forms, the square build, the jolly John Bulls of the period, such as we yet find them, nourished by meat and porter, sustained by bodily exercise and boxing. These are the men we must keep before us, if we will understand how political liberty has been established in the country. Gradually they find the simple knights, their colleagues in the county court, too poor to assist with the great barons at the royal assemblies, coalescing with them. They become united by community of interests, by similarity of manners, by nearness of condition; they take them for their representatives, they elect them.[2] They have now entered upon public life, and the advent of a new reinforcement, gives them a perpetual standing in their changed condition. The towns laid waste by the Conquest are gradually repeopled. They obtain or exact charters; the townsmen buy themselves out of the arbitrary taxes that were imposed on them; they get possession of the land on which their houses are built; they unite themselves under mayors and aldermen. Each town now, within the meshes of the great feudal net, is a power. Leicester, rebelling against the king, summons two burgesses from each town to Parliament,[3] to authorise and support him. Thenceforth the conquered race, both in country and town, has

[1] *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, ii. p. 17, *v.* 547.

[2] From 1214, and also in 1225 and 1254. Guizot, *Origin of the Representative System in England*, pp. 297–299.

[3] In 1264.

risen to political life. If they are taxed, it is with their consent; they pay nothing which they do not agree to. Early in the fourteenth century their united deputies compose the House of Commons; and already, at the close of the preceding century, the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in the name of the king, said to the pope, 'It is the custom of the kingdom of England, that in all affairs relating to the state of this kingdom, the advice of all who are interested in them should be taken.'

VII.

If they have acquired liberties, it is because they have conquered them; circumstances have assisted, but character has done more. The protection of the great barons and the alliance of the plain knights have strengthened them; but it was by their native roughness and energy that they maintained their independence. For, look at the contrast they offer at this moment to their neighbours. What occupies the mind of the French people? The fabliaux, the naughty tricks of Renard, the art of deceiving Master Ysengrin, of stealing his wife, of cheating him out of his dinner, of getting him beaten by a third party without danger to one's self; in short, the triumph of poverty and cleverness over power united to folly. The popular hero is already the artful plebeian, chaffing, light-hearted, who, later on, will ripen into Panurge and Figaro, not apt to withstand you to your face, too sharp to care for great victories and habits of strife, inclined by the nimbleness of his wit to dodge round an obstacle; if he but touch a man with the tip of his finger, that man tumbles into the trap. But here we have other customs: it is Robin Hood, a valiant outlaw, living free and bold in the green forest, waging frank and open war against sheriff and law.[1] If ever a man was popular in his country, it was he. 'It is he,' says an old historian, whom the common people love so dearly to celebrate in games and comedies, and whose history, sung by fiddlers, interests them more than any other.' In the sixteenth century he still had his commemoration day, observed by all the people in the small towns and in the country. Bishop Latimer, making his pastoral tour, announced one day that he would preach in a certain place. On the morrow, proceeding to the church, he found the doors closed, and waited more than an hour before they brought him the key. At last a man came and said to him, 'Syr, thys ys a busye day with us; we cannot heare you: it is Robyn Hoodes Daye. The parishe are gone abrode to gather for Robyn Hoode. . . . I was fayne there to geve place to Robyn Hoode.'[2] The bishop was obliged to divest himself of his ecclesiastical garments and proceed on his journey, leaving his place to archers dressed in green, who played on a rustic stage the parts of Robin Hood, Little John, and their band. In fact, he is the national hero. Saxon in the

[1] Aug. Thierry, iv. 56. Ritson's *Robin Hood*, 1832.

[2] Latimer's *Sermons*, ed. Arber 6th Sermon, 1869, p 173.

first place, and waging war against the men of law, against bishops and archbishops, whose sway was so heavy; generous, moreover, giving to a poor ruined knight clothes, horse, and money to buy back the land he had pledged to a rapacious abbot; compassionate too, and kind to the poor, enjoining his men not to injure yeomen and labourers; but before all rash, bold, proud, who would go and draw his bow under the sheriff's eyes and to his face; ready with blows, whether to receive or to return them. He slew fourteen out of fifteen foresters who came to arrest him; he slays the sheriff, the judge, the town gatekeeper; he is ready to slay plenty more; and all this joyously, jovially, like an honest fellow who eats well, has a hard skin, lives in the open air, and revels in animal life.

'In somer when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is fulle mery in feyre foreste
To here the foulys song.'

That is how many ballads begin; and the fine weather, which makes the stags and oxen rush headlong with extended horns, inspires them with the thought of exchanging blows with sword or stick. Robin dreamed that two yeomen were thrashing him, and he wants to go and find them, angrily repulsing Little John, who offers to go in advance:

'Ah John, by me thou settest noe store,
And that I farley finde:
How offt send I my men before,
And tarry myselfe behinde?

'It is no cunning a knave to ken,
An a man but heare him speake;
An it were not for bursting of my bowe,
John, I thy head wold breake.'[1] . . .

He goes alone, and meets the robust yeoman, Guy of Gisborne:

'He that had neythere beene kythe nor kin,
Might have seen a full fayre fight,
To see how together these yeomen went
With blades both browne and bright,

'To see how these yeomen together they fought
Two howres of a summer's day;
Yett neither Robin Hood nor sir Guy
Them fettled to flye away.'[2]

You see Guy the yeoman is as brave as Robin Hood; he came to seek him in the wood, and drew the bow almost as well as he. This old popular poetry is not the praise of a single bandit, but of an entire class, the yeomanry. 'God haffe mersey on Robin Hodys solle, and saffe all god yemanry.' That is how many ballads end. The strong

[1] Ritson, *Robin Hood Ballads*, i. iv. *v.* 41–48. [2] *Ibid*, *v.* 145–152.

yeoman, inured to blows, a good archer, clever at sword and stick, is the favourite. There was also redoubtable, armed townsfolk, accustomed to make use of their arms. Here they are at work:

"O that were a shame," said jolly Robin,
"We being three, and thou but one."
The pinder[1] leapt back then thirty good foot,
'Twas thirty good foot and one.

'He leaned his back fast unto a thorn,
And his foot against a stone,
And there he fought a long summer's day,
A summer's day so long,

'Till that their swords on their broad bucklers
Were broke fast into their hands.'[2] . . .

Often even Robin does not get the advantage:

'"I pass not for length," bold Arthur reply'd,
"My staff is of oke so free;
Eight foot and a half, it will knock down a calf,
And I hope it will knock down thee."

'Then Robin could no longer forbear,
He gave him such a knock,
Quickly and soon the blood came down
Before it was ten a clock.

'Then Arthur he soon recovered himself,
And gave him such a knock on the crown,
That from every side of bold Robin Hood's head
The blood came trickling down.

'Then Robin raged like a wild boar,
As soon as he saw his own blood:
Then Bland was in hast, he laid on so fast,
As though he had been cleaving of wood.

'And about and about and about they went,
Like two wild bores in a chase,
Striving to aim each other to maim,
Leg, arm, or any other place.

'And knock for knock they lustily dealt,
Which held for two hours and more,
Till all the wood rang at every bang,
They ply'd their work so sore.

'"Hold thy hand, hold thy hand," said Robin Hood,
"And let thy quarrel fall;
For here we may thrash our bones all to mesh,
And get no coyn at all.

[1] A pinder's task was to pin the sheep in the fold, cattle in the penfold or pound (Richardson).—Tr.

[2] Ritson, ii. 3, *v.* 17-26.

'"And in the forest of merry Sherwood,
Hereafter thou shalt be free."
"God a mercy for nought, my freedom I bought,
I may thank my staff, and not thee.'"[1] . .

'Who are you, then?' says Robin:

'"I am a tanner," bold Arthur reply'd,
"In Nottingham long I have wrought;
And if thou'lt come there, I vow and swear,
I will tan thy hide for nought."

'"God a mercy, good fellow," said jolly Robin,
"Since thou art so kind and free;
And if thou wilt tan my hide for nought,
I will do as much for thee."'[2]

With these generous offers, they embrace; a free exchange of honest blows always prepares the way for friendship. It was so Robin Hood tried Little John, whom he loved all his life after. Little John was seven feet high, and being on a bridge, would not give way. Honest Robin would not use his bow against him, but went and cut a stick seven feet long; and they agreed amicably to fight on the bridge until one should fall into the water. They hit and smite to such a tune that 'their bones did sound.' In the end Robin falls, and he feels nothing but respect for Little John. Another time, having a sword with him, he was thrashed by a tinker who had only a stick. Full of admiration, he gives him a hundred pounds. One time it was by a potter, who refused him toll; another by a shepherd. They fight for pastime. Even now-a-days boxers give each other a friendly grip before meeting; they knock one another about in this country honourably, without malice, fury, or shame. Broken teeth, black eyes, smashed ribs, do not call for murderous vengeance; it would seem that the bones are more solid and the nerves less sensitive in England than elsewhere. Blows once exchanged, they take each other by the hand, and dance together on the green grass:

'Then Robin took them both by the hands,
And danc'd round about the oke tree.
"For three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men we be."'

Observe, moreover, that these people, in each parish, practised the bow every Sunday, and were the best archers in the world,—that from the close of the fourteenth century the general emancipation of the villeins multiplied their number enormously, and you may understand how, amidst all the operations and changes of the great central powers, the liberty of the subject endured. After all, the only permanent and unalterable guarantee in every country and under every constitution

[1] Ritson, ii. 6, *v.* 58–89. [2] *Ibid. v.* 94–101

is this unspoken declaration in the heart of the mass of the people, which is well understood on all sides: 'If any one touches my property, enters my house, obstructs or molests me, let him beware. I have patience, but I have also strong arms, good comrades, a good blade, and, on occasion, a firm resolve, happen what may, to plunge my blade up to its hilt in his throat.'

VIII.

Thus thought Sir John Fortescue, Chancellor of England under Henry VI., exiled in France during the Wars of the Roses, one of the oldest prose-writers, and the first who weighed and explained the constitution of his country.[1] He says:

'It is cowardise and lack of hartes and corage that kepeth the Frenchmen from rysyng, and not povertye;[2] which corage no Frenche man hath like to the English man. It hath ben often seen in Englond that iij or iv thefes, for povertie, hath sett upon vij or viij true men, and robbyd them al. But it hath not ben seen in Fraunce, that vij or viij thefes have ben hardy to robbe iij or iv true men. Wherfor it is right seld that Frenchmen be hangyd for robberye, for that they have no hertys to do so terryble an acte. There be therfor mo men hangyd in Englond, in a yere, for robberye and manslaughter, than ther be hangid in Fraunce for such cause of crime in vij yers.'[3]

This throws a sudden and terrible light on the violent condition of this armed community, where blows are an everyday matter, and where every one, rich and poor, lives with his hand on his sword. There were great bands of malefactors under Edward I., who infested the country, and fought with those who came to seize them. The inhabitants of the towns were obliged to gather together with those of the neighbouring towns, with hue and cry, to pursue and capture them. Under Edward III. there were barons who rode about with armed escorts and archers, seizing the manors, carrying off ladies and girls of high degree, mutilating, killing, extorting ransoms from people in their own houses, as if they were in an enemy's land, and sometimes coming before the judges at the sessions in such guise and in so great force that the judges were afraid and dare not administer justice.[4] Read

[1] *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy—A learned Commendation of the Politic Laws of England* (Latin). I frequently quote from the second work, which is complete.

[2] The courage which gives utterance here is coarse; the English instincts are combative and independent. The French race, and the Gauls generally, are perhaps the most reckless of life of any.

[3] *The Difference*, etc., 3d ed. 1724, ch. xiii. p. 98. There are now-a-days in France 42 highway robberies as against 738 in England. In 1843, there were in England four times as many accusations of crimes and offences as in France having regard to the number of inhabitants (*Moreau de Jonnès*)

[4] Statute of Winchester, 1285; Ordinance of 1378.

the letters of the Paston family, under Henry VI. and Edward IV., and you will see how private war was at every door, how it was necessary to defend oneself with men and arms, to be alert for the defence of one's property, to be self-reliant, to depend on one's own strength and courage. It is this excess of vigour and readiness to fight which, after their victories in France, set them against one another in England, in the butcheries of the Wars of the Roses. The strangers who saw them were astonished at their bodily strength and courage of heart, at the great pieces of beef 'which feed their muscles, at their military habits, their fierce obstinacy, as of savage beasts.'[1] They are like their bulldogs, an untameable race, who in their mad courage 'cast themselves with shut eyes into the den of a Russian bear, and get their head broken like a rotten apple.' This strange condition of a military community, so full of danger, and requiring so much effort, does not make them afraid. King Edward having given orders to send disturbers of the peace to prison without legal proceedings, and not to liberate them, on bail or otherwise, the Commons declared the order 'horribly vexatious;' resist it, refuse to be too much protected. Less peace, but more independence. They maintain the guarantees of the subject at the expense of public security, and prefer turbulent liberty to arbitrary order. Better suffer marauders whom one can fight, than provosts under whom they would have to bend.

This proud and persistent notion gives rise to, and fashions, Fortescue's whole work:

'Ther be two kynds of kyngdomys, of the which that one ys a lordship callid in Latyne Dominium regale, and that other is callid Dominium politicum et regale.'

The first is established in France, and the second in England.

'And they dyversen in that the first may rule his people by such lawys as he makyth hymself, and therefor, he may set upon them talys, and other impositions, such as he wyl hymself, without their assent. The secund may not rule hys people by other laws than such as they assenten unto; and therfor he may set upon them non impositions without their own assent.'[2]

In a state like this, the will of the people is the prime element of life. Sir John Fortescue says further:

'A king of England cannot at his pleasure make any alterations in the laws of the land, for the nature of his government is not only regal, but political.'

'In the body politic, the first thing which lives and moves is the intention of the people, having in it the blood, that is, the prudential care and provision for the public good, which it transmits and communicates to the head, as to the principal part, and to all the rest of the members of the said body politic, whereby it subsists and is invigorated. The law under which the people is incorporated may be compared to the nerves or sinews of the body natural. . . . And as the

[1] Benvenuto Cellini, quoted by Froude, i. 20, *Hist. of England.* Shakspeare, *Henry V.*; conversation of French lords before the battle of Agincourt.

[2] *The Difference*, etc., p. i.

bones and all the other members of the body preserve their functions and discharge their several offices by the nerves, so do the members of the community by the law. And as the head of the body natural cannot change its nerves or sinews, cannot deny to the several parts their proper energy, their due proportion and aliment of blood, neither can a king who is the head of the body politic change the laws thereof, nor take from the people what is theirs by right, against their consents. . . . For he is appointed to protect his subjects in their lives, properties, and laws; for this very end and purpose he has the delegation of power from the people.'

Here we have all the ideas of Locke in the fifteenth century; so powerful is practice to suggest theory! so quickly does man discover, in the enjoyment of liberty, the nature of liberty! Fortescue goes further: he contrasts, step by step, the Roman law, that heritage of all Latin peoples, with the English law, that heritage of all Teutonic peoples: one the work of absolute princes, and tending altogether to the sacrifice of the individual; the other the work of the common will, tending altogether to protect the person. He contrasts the maxims of the imperial jurisconsults, who accord 'force of law to all which is determined by the prince,' with the statutes of England, which 'are not enacted by the sole will of the prince, . . . but with the concurrent consent of the whole kingdom, by their representatives in Parliament, . . . more than three hundred select persons.' He contrasts the arbitrary nomination of imperial officers with the election of the sheriff, and says:

'There is in every county a certain officer, called the king's sheriff, who, amongst other duties of his office, executes within his county all mandates and judgments of the king's courts of justice: he is an annual officer; and it is not lawful for him, after the expiration of his year, to continue to act in his said office, neither shall he be taken in again to execute the said office within two years thence next ensuing. The manner of his election is thus: Every year, on the morrow of All-Souls, there meet in the King's Court of Exchequer all the king's counsellors, as well lords spiritual and temporal, as all other the king's justices, all the barons of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, and certain other officers, when all of them, by common consent, nominate three of every county knights or esquires, persons of distinction, and such as they esteem fittest qualified to bear the office of sheriff of that county for the year ensuing. The king only makes choice of one out of the three so nominated and returned, who, in virtue of the king's letters patent, is constituted High Sheriff of that county.'

He contrasts the Roman procedure, which is satisfied with two witnesses to condemn a man with the jury, the three permitted challenges, the admirable guarantees of justice with which the uprightness, number, repute, and condition of the juries surround the sentence. About the juries he says:

'Twelve good and true men being sworn, as in the manner above related, legally qualified, that is, having, over and besides their moveables, possessions in land sufficient, as was said, wherewith to maintain their rank and station; neither inspected by, nor at variance with either of the parties; all of the neighborhood

there shall be read to them, in English, by the Court, the record and nature of the plea.'[1]

Thus protected, the English commons cannot be other than flourishing. Consider, on the other hand, he says to the young prince whom he is instructing, the condition of the commons in France. By their taxes, tax on salt, on wine, billeting of soldiers, they are reduced to great misery. You have seen them on your travels. . . .

'The same Commons be so impoverishid and distroyyd, that they may unneth lyve. Thay drink water, thay eate apples, with bred right brown made of rye. They eate no fleshe, but if it be selden, a litill larde, or of the entrails or heds of bests sclayne for the nobles and merchants of the land. They weryn no wollyn, but if it be a pore cote under their uttermost garment, made of grete canvass, and cal it a frok. Their hosyn be of like canvas, and passen not their knee, wherfor they be gartrid and their thyghs bare. Their wifs and children gone bare fote. . . . For sum of them, that was wonte to pay to his lord for his tenement which he hyrith by the year a scute payth now to the kyng, over that scute, fyve skuts. Wher thrugh they be artyd by necessite so to watch, labour and grub in the ground for their sustenance, that their nature is much wasted, and the kynd of them brought to nowght. Thay gone crokyd and ar feeble, not able to fight nor to defend the realm; nor they have wepon, nor monye to buy them wepon withal. . . . This is the frute first of hyre Jus regale. . . . But blessed be God, this land ys rulid under a better lawe, and therfor the people therof be not in such penurye, nor therby hurt in their persons, but they be wealthie and have all things necessarie to the sustenance of nature. Wherefore they be myghty and able to resyste the adversaries of the realms that do or will do them wrong. Loo, this is the frut of Jus politicum et regale, under which we lyve.'[2] 'Everye inhabiter of the realme of England useth and enjoyeth at his pleasure all the fruites that his land or cattel beareth, with al the profits and commodities which by his owne travayle, or by the labour of others, hae gaineth; not hindered by the iniurie or wrong deteinement of anye man, but that hee shall bee allowed a reasonable recompence.[3] . . . Hereby it commeth to passe that the men of that lande are riche, havyng aboundaunce of golde and silver, and other thinges necessarie for the maintenaunce of man's life. They drinke no water, unlesse it be so, that some for devotion, and uppon a zeale of penaunce, doe abstaine from other drinks. They eate plentifully of all kindes of fleshe and fishe. They weare fine woollen cloth in all their apparel; they have also aboundaunce of bed-coveringes in their houses, and of all other woollen stuffe. They have greate store of all hustlementes and implementes of householde, they are plentifully furnished with al instruments of husbandry, and all other things that are requisite to the accomplishment of a quiet and wealthy lyfe, according to their estates and degrees. Neither are they sued in the lawe, but onely before ordinary iudges, where by the lawes of the lande they are iustly intreated. Neither are they

[1] The original of this very famous treatise, *de Laudibus Legum Angliæ*, was written in Latin between 1464 and 1470, first published in 1537, and translated into English in 1737 by Francis Gregor. I have taken these extracts from the magnificent edition of Sir John Fortescue's works published in 1869 for private distribution, and edited by Thomes Fortescue, Lord Clermont. Some of the pieces quoted, left in the old spelling, are taken from an older edition.—Tr.

[2] *Of an Absolute and Limited Monarchy*, 3d ed., 1724, ch. iii. p. 15

[3] Commines bears the same testimony.

arrested or impleaded for their moveables or possessions, or arraigned of any offence, bee it never so great and outragious, but after the lawes of the land, and before the iudges aforesaid.' [1]

All this arises from the constitution of the country and the distribution of the land. Whilst in other countries we find only a population of paupers, with here and there a few lords, England is covered and filled with owners of lands and fields; so that 'therein so small a thorpe cannot bee founde, wherein dwelleth not a knight, an esquire, or suche a housholder as is there commonly called a franklayne, enryched with greate possessions. And also other freeholders, and many yeomen able for their livelodes to make a jurye in fourme afore-mentioned. For there bee in that lande divers yeomen, which are able to dispende by the yeare above a hundred poundes.'[2] Harrison says:[3]

'This sort of people have more estimation than labourers and the common sort of artificers, and these commonlie live wealthilie, keepe good houses, and travell to get riches. They are for the most part farmers to gentlemen,' and keep servants of their own. 'These were they that in times past made all France afraid. And albeit they be not called master, as gentlemen are, or sir, as to knights apperteineth, but onelie John and Thomas, etc., yet have they beene found to have done verie good service; and the kings of England, in foughten battels, were wont to remaine among them (who were their footmen) as the French kings did among their horssemen: the prince thereby showing where his chiefe strength did consist.'

Such men, says Fortescue, might form a legal jury, and vote, resist, be associated, do everything wherein a free government consists: for they were numerous in every district; they were not down-trodden like the timid peasants of France; they had their honour and that of their family to maintain; 'they be well provided with arms; they remember that they have won battles in France.'[4] Such is the class, still obscure,

[1] *De Laudibus*, etc., ch. xxxvi.

[2] 'The might of the realme most stondyth upon archers which be not rich men.' Compare Hallam, ii. 482. All this takes us back as far as the Conquest, and farther. 'It is reasonable to suppose that the greater part of those who appear to have possessed small freeholds or parcels of manors were no other than the original nation. . . . A respectable class of free socagers, having in general full right of alienating their lands, and holding them probably at a small certain rent from the lord of the manor, frequently occurs in the Domesday Book.' At all events, there were in Domesday Book Saxons 'perfectly exempt from villenage.' This class is mentioned with respect in the treatises of Glanvil and Bracton. As for the villeins, they were quickly liberated in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, either by their own energies or by becoming copyholders. The Wars of the Roses still further raised the commons; orders were frequently issued, previous to a battle, to slay the nobles and spare the commoners.

[3] *Description of England*, 275.

[4] The following is a portrait of a yeoman, by Latimer, in the first sermon preached before Edward VI., 8th March 1549: 'My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of £3 or £4 by year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able, and did find

but more rich and powerful every century, who, founded on the degraded Saxon aristocracy, and sustained by the surviving Saxon character, ended, under the lead of the inferior Norman nobility, and under the patronage of the superior Norman nobility, in establishing and settling a free constitution, and a nation worthy of liberty.

IX.

When, as here, men are endowed with a serious character, strengthened by a resolute spirit, and entrenched in independent habits, they meddle with their conscience as with their daily business, and end by laying hands on church as well as state. It is now a long time since the exactions of the Roman See provoked the resistance of the people,[1] and a presuming priesthood became unpopular. Men complained that the best livings were given by the Pope to non-resident strangers; that some Italian, unknown in England, possessed fifty or sixty benefices in England; that English money poured into Rome; and that the clergy, being judged only by clergy, gave themselves up to their vices, and abused their state of impunity. In the first years of Henry III. there were reckoned nearly a hundred murders committed by priests still alive. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the ecclesiastical revenue was twelve times greater than the civil; about half the soil was in the hands of the clergy. At the end of the century the commons declared that the taxes paid to the church were five times greater than the taxes paid to the crown; and some years afterwards,[2]

the king a harness, with himself and his horse; while he came to the place that he should receive the king's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went unto Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the King's Majesty now. He married my sisters with £5 or 20 nobles a-piece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God; he kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor; and all this did he of the said farm. Where he that now hath it payeth £16 by the year, or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor.'

This is from the sixth sermon, preached before the young king, 12th April 1549: 'In my time my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn (me) any other thing; and so, I think, other men did their children. He taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not to draw with strength of arms, as other nations do, but with strength of the body. I had my bows bought me according to my age and strength; as I increased in them, so my bows were made bigger and bigger; for men shall never shoot well except they be brought up in it. It is a goodly art, a wholesome kind of exercise, and much commended in physic.'

[1] *Pict. Hist.* i. 802. In 1246, 1376. Thierry, iii. 79.

[2] 1404–1409. The commons declared that with these revenues the king would be able to maintain 15 earls, 1500 knights, 6200 squires, and 100 hospitals: each earl receiving annually 300 marks; each knight 100 marks, and the produce of four ploughed lands; each squire 40 marks, and the produce of two ploughed lands. *Pict. Hist.* ii. 142.

considering that the wealth of the clergy only served to keep them in idleness and luxury, they proposed to confiscate it for the public benefit. Already the idea of the Reformation had forced itself upon them. They remembered how in the ballads Robin Hood ordered his folk to 'spare the yeomen, labourers, even knights, if they are good fellows,' but never to pardon abbots or bishops. The prelates grievously oppressed the people with their laws, tribunals, and tithes; and suddenly, amid the pleasant banter and the monotonous babble of the Norman versifiers, we hear resound the indignant voice of a Saxon, a man of the people and a victim.

It is the vision of Piers Ploughman, a carter, written, it is supposed, by a secular priest of Oxford.[1] Doubtless the traces of French taste are perceptible. It could not be otherwise: the people from below can never quite prevent themselves from imitating the people above; and the most unshackled popular poets, Burns and Béranger, too often preserve an academic style. So here a fashionable machinery, the allegory of the Roman de la Rose, is pressed into service. We have Do-well, Covetousness, Avarice, Simony, Conscience, and a whole world of talking abstractions. But in spite of these vain foreign phantoms, the body of the poem is national, and true to life. The old language reappears in part; the old metre altogether; no more rhymes, but barbarous alliterations; no more jesting, but a harsh gravity, a sustained invective, a grand and sombre imagination, heavy Latin texts, hammered down as by a Protestant hand. Piers Ploughman went to sleep on the Malvern hills, and there had a wonderful dream:

> 'Thanne gan I meten—a merveillous swevene,
> That I was in a wildernesse—wiste I nevere where;
> And as I biheeld into the eest,—an heigh to the sonne,
> I seigh a tour on a toft,—trieliche y-maked,
> A deep dale bynethe—a dongeon thereinne
> With depe diches and derke—and dredfulle of sighte.
> A fair feeld ful of folk—fond I ther bitwene,
> Of alle manere of men,—the meene and the riche,
> Werchynge and wandrynge—as the world asketh.
> Some putten hem to the plough,—pleiden ful selde,
> In settynge and sowynge—swonken ful harde,
> And wonnen that wastours—with glotonye dystruyeth.'[2]

A gloomy picture of the world, like the frightful dreams which occur so often in Albert Durer and Luther. The first reformers were persuaded that the earth was given over to evil; that the devil had in it his empire and his officers; that Antichrist, seated on the throne of Rome, spread out ecclesiastical pomps to seduce souls, and cast them into the fire of hell. So here Antichrist, with raised banner, enters a convent; bells are rung; monks in solemn procession go to meet him,

[1] About 1362.

[2] *Piers Ploughman's Vision and Creed*, ed. T. Wright, 1856, i. p. 2, *v.* 21–44

and receive with congratulations their lord and father.[1] With seven great giants, the seven deadly sins, he besieges Conscience; and the assault is led by Idleness, who brings with her an army of more than a thousand prelates: for vices reign, more hateful from being in holy places, and employed in the church of God in the devil's service

'Ac now is Religion a rydere—a romere aboute,
A ledere of love-dayes—and a lond-buggere,
A prikere on a palfrey—fro manere to manere. . . .
And but if his knave knele—that shal his coppe brynge,
He loureth on hym, and asketh hym—who taughte hym curteisie.'[2]

But this sacrilegious show has its day, and God puts His hand on men in order to warn them. By order of Conscience, Nature sends up a host of plagues and diseases:

'Kynde Conscience tho herde,—and cam out of the planetes,
And sente forth his forreyours—feveres and fluxes,
Coughes and cardiacles,—crampes and tooth-aches,
Reumes and radegundes,—and roynous scabbes,
Biles and bocches,—and brennynge agues,
Frenesies and foule yveles,—forageres of kynde. . . .
There was "Harrow! and Help!—Here cometh Kynde!
With Deeth that is dredful—to undo us alle!"
The lord that lyved after lust—tho aloud cryde. . . .
Deeth cam dryvynge after,—and al to duste passhed
Kynges and knyghtes,—kaysers and popes, . . .
Manye a lovely lady—and lemmans of knyghtes,
Swowned and swelted for sorwe of hise dyntes.'[3]

Here is a crowd of miseries, like those which Milton has described in his vision of human life; tragic pictures and emotions, such as the reformers delight to dwell upon. There is a like speech delivered by John Knox, before the fair ladies of Mary Stuart, which tears the veil from the human corpse just as brutally, in order to exhibit its shame. The conception of the world, proper to the people of the north, all sad and moral, shows itself already. They are never comfortable in their country; they have to strive continually against cold or rain. They cannot live there carelessly, lying under a lovely sky, in a sultry and clear atmosphere, their eyes filled with the noble beauty and happy serenity of the land. They must work to live; be attentive, exact, close and repair their houses, wade boldly through the mud behind their plough, light their lamps in the shops during the day. Their climate imposes endless inconvenience, and exacts endless endurance. Hence arise melancholy and the idea of duty. Man naturally thinks of life as of a battle, oftener of black death which closes this

deadly show, and leads so many plumed and disorderly processions to the silence and the eternity of the grave. All this visible world is vain; there is nothing true but human virtue,—the courageous energy with which man attains to self-command, the generous energy with which he employs himself in the service of others. On this view he fixes his eyes; they pierce through worldly gauds, neglect sensual joys, to attain this. By such internal action the ideal is displaced; a new source of action springs up—the idea of righteousness. What sets them against ecclesiastical pomp and insolence, is neither the envy of the poor and low, nor the anger of the oppressed, nor a revolutionary desire to experimentalise abstract truth, but conscience. They tremble lest they should not work out their salvation if they continue in a corrupted church; they fear the menaces of God, and dare not embark on the great journey with unsafe guides. 'What is righteousness?' asked Luther anxiously, 'and how shall I obtain it?' With like anxiety Piers Ploughman goes to seek Do-well, and asks each one to show him where he shall find him. 'With us,' say the friars. 'Contra quath ich, *Septies in die cadit justus*, and ho so syngeth certys doth nat wel;' so he betakes himself to 'study and writing,' like Luther; the clerks at table speak much of God and of the Trinity, 'and taken Bernarde to witnesse, and putteth forth presompcions . . . ac the carful mai crie and quaken atte gate, bothe a fyngred and a furst, and for defaute spille ys non so hende to have hym yn. Clerkus and knyghtes carpen of God ofte, and haveth hym muche in hure mouthe, ac mene men in herte;' and heart, inner faith, living virtue, are what constitute true religion. This is what these dull Saxons had begun to discover; the Teutonic conscience, and English good sense too, had been aroused, with individual energy, the resolution to judge and to decide alone, by and for one's self. 'Christ is our hede that sitteth on hie, Heddis ne ought we have no mo,' says a poem,[1] attributed to Chaucer, and which, with others, claims independence for Christian consciences

> 'We ben his membres bothe also,
> Father he taught us call him all,
> Maisters to call forbad he tho;
> Al maisters ben wickid and fals.'

No mediator between man and God. In vain the doctors state that they have authority for their words; there is a word of greater authority, to wit, God's. We hear it in the fourteenth century, this grand word. It quitted the learned schools, the dead languages, the dusty shelves on which the clergy suffered it to sleep, covered with a confusion of commentaries and Fathers.[2] Wiclif appeared and translated it like Luther,

[1] *Piers Plowman's Crede; the Plowman's Tale*, printed in 1550. There were three editions in one year, it was so manifestly Protestant.

[2] Knighton, about 1400, wrote thus of Wiclif: 'Transtulit de Latino in angli-cam linguam, non angelicam. Unde per ipsum fit vulgare, et magis apertum

and in a spirit similar to Luther's. 'Cristen men and wymmen, olde and yonge, shulden studie fast in the Newe Testament, for it is of ful autorite, and opyn to undirstonding of simple men, as to the poyntis that be moost nedeful to salvacioun.'[1] Religion must be secular, in order to escape from the hands of the clergy, who forestall it; each must hear and read for himself the word of God: he will be sure that it has not been corrupted in the passage; he will feel it better, and more, he will understand it better; for

'ech place of holy writ, both opyn and derk, techith mekenes and charite; and therfore he that kepith mekenes and charite hath the trewe undirstondyng and perfectioun of al holi writ. . . . Therfore no simple man of wit be aferd unmesurabli to studie in the text of holy writ . . . and no clerk be proude of the verrey undirstondyng of holy writ, for whi undirstonding of hooly writ with outen charite that kepith Goddis heestis, makith a man depper dampned . . . and pride and covetise of clerkis is cause of her blindees and eresie, and priveth them fro verrey undirstondyng of holy writ.'[2]

These are the memorable words that began to circulate in the markets and in the schools. They read the translated Bible, and commented on it; they judged the existing Church after it. What judgments these serious and renovated minds passed upon it, with what readiness they pushed on to the true religion of their race, we may see from their petition to Parliament.[3] One hundred and thirty years before Luther, they said that the pope was not established by Christ, that pilgrimages and image-worship were akin to idolatry, that external forms are of no importance, that priests ought not to possess temporal wealth, that the doctrine of transubstantiation made a people idolatrous, that priests have not the power of absolving from sin. In proof of all this they brought forward texts of Scripture. Fancy these brave spirits, simple and strong souls, who began to read at night, in their shops, by candle-light; for they were shopmen—a tailor, and a furrier, and a baker—who, with some men of letters, began to read, and then to believe, and finally got themselves burned.[4] What a sight for the fifteenth century, and what a promise! It seems as though, with liberty of action, liberty of mind begins to appear; that these common folk will think and speak; that under a conventional literature, introduced from France, a new literature is dawning; and that England, genuine England, half-mute since the Conquest, will at last find a voice.

She had not found it. King and peers ally themselves to the Church, pass terrible statutes, destroy lives, burn heretics alive, often

laicis et mulieribus legere scientibus quam solet esse clericis admodum litteratis, et bene intelligentibus. Et sic evangelica margerita spargitur et a porcis conculcatur . . . (ita) ut laicis commune æternum quod ante fuerat clericis et ecclesiæ doctoribus talentum supernum.'

[1] Wiclif's Bible, ed. Forshall and Madden, 1850, preface to Oxford edition, p. 2

[2] *Ibid.* [3] In 1395.

[4] 1401 William Sawtré, the first Lollard burned alive.

with refinement of torture,—one in a barrel, another hung by an iron chain round his waist. The temporal wealth of the clergy had been attacked, and therewith the whole English constitution; and the great establishment above crushed out with its whole weight the assailants from below. Darkly, in silence, while in the Wars of the Roses the nobles were destroying each other, the commoners went on working and living, separating themselves from the official Church, maintaining their liberties, amassing their wealth,[1] but not going beyond. Like a vast rock which underlies the soil, yet crops up here and there at distant intervals, they barely exhibit themselves. No great poetical or religious work displays them to the light. They sang; but their ballads, first ignored, then transformed, reach us only in a late edition. They prayed; but beyond one or two indifferent poems, their incomplete and repressed doctrine bore no fruit. One may well see from the verse, tone, and drift of their ballads, that they are capable of the finest poetic originality,[2] but their poetry is in the hands of yeomen and harpers. We perceive, by the precocity and energy of their religious protests, that they are capable of the most severe and impassioned creeds; but their faith remains hidden in the shop-parlours of a few obscure sectaries. Neither their faith nor their poetry has been able to attain its end or issue. The Renaissance and the Reformation, those two national outbreaks, are still far off; and the literature of the period retains to the end, like the highest ranks of English society, almost the perfect stamp of its French origin and its foreign models.

[1] Commines, v. ch. 19 and 20: 'In my opinion, of all kingdoms of the world of which I have any knowledge, where the public weal is best observed, and least violence is exercised on the people, and where no buildings are overthrown or demolished in war, England is the best; and the ruin and misfortune falls on them who wage the war. . . . The kingdom of England has this advantage beyond other nations, that the people and the country are not destroyed or burnt, nor the buildings demolished; and ill-fortune falls on men of war, and especially on the nobles.'

[2] See the ballads of *Chevy Chase*, *The Nut-Brown Maid*, etc. Many of them are admirable little dramas.

CHAPTER III.

The New Tongue.

I. Chaucer—His education—His political and social life—Wherein his talent was serviceable—He paints the second feudal society.

II. How the middle age degenerated—Decline of the serious element in manners, books, and works of art—Need of excitement—Analogies of architecture and literature.

III. Wherein Chaucer belongs to the middle age—Romantic and ornamental poems—*Le Roman de la Rose*—*Troïlus and Cressida*—*Canterbury Tales*—Order of description and events—*The House of Fame*—Fantastic dreams and visions—Love poems—*Troïlus and Cressida*—Exaggerated development of love in the middle age—Why the mind took this path—Mystic love—*The Flower and the Leaf*—Sensual love—*Troïlus and Cressida.*

IV. Wherein Chaucer is French—Satirical and jovial poems—*Canterbury Tales*—*The Wife of Bath* and marriage—The mendicant friar and religion—Buffoonery, waggery, and coarseness in the middle age.

V. Wherein Chaucer was English and original—Idea of character and individual—Van Eyck and Chaucer contemporary—Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*—Portraits of the franklin, monk, miller, citizen, knight, squire, prioress, the good clerk—Connection of events and characters—General idea—Importance of the same—Chaucer a precursor of the Reformation—He halts by the way—Delays and Childishness—Causes of this feebleness—His prose, and scholastic notion—How he is isolated in his age.

VI. Connection of philosophy and poetry—How general notions failed under the scholastic philosophy—Why poetry failed—Comparison of civilisation and decadence in the middle age, and in Spain—Extinction of the English literature—Translators—Rhyming chronicles—Didactic poets—Compilers of moralities—Gower—Occleve—Lydgate—Analogy of taste in costumes, buildings, and literature—Sad notion of fate, and human misery—Hawes—Barclay—Skelton—Elements of the Reformation and of the Renaissance.

I.

AMID so many barren endeavours, throughout the long impotence of Norman literature, which was content to copy, and of Saxon literature, which bore no fruit, a definite language was nevertheless attained, and there was room for a great writer. Geoffrey Chaucer appeared, a man of mark, inventive though a disciple, original though a translator, who by his genius, education, and life, was enabled to know and to depict a whole world, but above all to satisfy the chivalric

world and the splendid courts which shone upon the heights.[1] He belonged to it, though learned and versed in all branches of scholastic knowledge; and he took such part in it, that his life from end to end was that of a man of the world, and a man of action. We find him alternately in King Edward's army, in the king's train, husband of a queen's maid of honour, a pensioner, a placeholder, a deputy in Parliament, a knight, founder of a family which was hereafter to become allied to royalty. Moreover, he was in the king's council, brother-in-law of the Duke of Lancaster, employed more than once in open embassies or secret missions at Florence, Genoa, Milan, Flanders, commissioner in France for the marriage of the Prince of Wales, high up and low down in the political ladder, disgraced, restored to place. This experience of business, travel, war, the court, was not like a book education. He was at the court of Edward III., the most splendid in Europe, amidst tourneys, grand entrances, displays; he took part in the pomps of France and Milan; conversed with Petrarch, perhaps with Boccacio and Froissart; was actor in, and spectator of, the finest and most tragical of dramas. In these few words, what ceremonies and processions are implied! what pageantry of armour, caparisoned horses, bedecked ladies! what display of gallant and lordly manners! what a varied and brilliant world, well suited to occupy the mind and eyes of a poet! Like Froissart, better than he, Chaucer could depict the character of the nobles, their mode of life, their amours, even other things, and please them by his portraiture.

II.

Two notions raised the middle age above the chaos of barbarism: one religious, which had fashioned the gigantic cathedrals, and swept the masses from their native soil to hurl them upon the Holy Land; the other secular, which had built feudal fortresses, and set the man of courage armed, upon his feet, within his own domain: the one had produced the adventurous hero, the other the mystical monk; the one, to wit, the belief in God, the other the belief in self. Both, running to excess, had degenerated by expenditure of force: the one had exalted independence into rebellion, the other had changed piety into enthusiasm: the first made man unfit for civil life, the second drew him back from natural life: the one, sanctioning disorder, dissolved society; the other, enthroning irrationality, perverted intelligence. Chivalry had need to be repressed before issuing in brigandage; devotion restrained before inducing slavery. Turbulent feudalism grew feeble, like oppressive theocracy; and the two great master passions, deprived of their sap and lopped of their stem, gave place by their weakness to the monotony of habit and the taste for worldliness, which shot forth in their stead and flourished under their name.

[1] Born between 1328 and 1345, died in 1400

Insensibly, the serious element declined, in books as in manners, in works of art as in books. Architecture, instead of being the handmaid of faith, became the slave of phantasy. It was exaggerated, confined to mere decoration, sacrificing general effect to detail, shot up its steeples to unreasonable heights, festooned its churches with canopies, pinnacles, trefoiled arches, open-worked galleries. 'Its whole aim was continually to climb higher, to clothe the sacred edifice with a gaudy bedizenment, as if it were a bride on the wedding morning.'[1] Before this marvellous lacework, what emotion could one feel but a pleased astonishment? What becomes of Christian sentiment before such scenic ornamentations? In like manner literature sets itself to play. In the eighteenth century, the second age of absolute monarchy, we saw on one side garlanded top-knots and cupolas, on the other pretty *vers de société*, courtly and sprightly tales, taking the place of severe beauty-lines and noble writings. Even so in the fourteenth century, the second age of feudalism, they had on one side the stone fretwork and slender efflorescence of aerial forms, and on the other finical verses and diverting stories, taking the place of the old grand architecture and the old simple literature. It is no longer the overflowing of a true sentiment which produces them, but the craving for excitement. Consider Chaucer, his subjects, and how he selects them. He goes far and wide to discover them, to Italy, France, to the popular legends, the ancient classics. His readers need diversity, and his business is to 'provide fine tales:' it was in those days the poet's business.[2] The lords at table have finished dinner, the minstrels come and sing, the brightness of the torches falls on the velvet and ermine, on the fantastic figures, the oddities, the elaborate embroidery of their long garments; then the poet arrives, presents his manuscript, 'richly illuminated, bound in crimson violet, embellished with silver clasps and bosses, roses of gold:' they ask him for his subject, and he answers 'Love.'

III.

In fact, it is the most agreeable subject, fittest to make the evening hours flow sweetly, amid the spiced goblets and the burning perfumes. Chaucer translated first that great storehouse of gallantry, the *Roman de la Rose*. There is no pleasanter entertainment. It is about a rose which the lover wished to pluck: the pictures of the May months, the groves, the flowery earth, the green hedgerows, abound and display their bloom. Then come portraits of the smiling ladies, Richesse, Fraunchise, Gaiety, and by way of contrast, two sad characters, Daunger and Travail, all crowding, and minutely described, with detail of features, clothing, attitude; they walk about, as in a piece of

[1] Renan, *De l'Art au Moyen Age*.

[2] See Froissart, his life with the Count of Foix and with King Richard II

tapestry, amid landscapes, dances, castles, with allegorical groups, in lively sparkling colours, displayed, contrasted, ever renewed and varied so as to entertain the sight. For an evil has arisen, unknown to serious ages—*ennui:* novelty and brilliancy followed by novelty and brilliancy are necessary to withstand it; and Chaucer, like Boccacio and Froissart, enters into the struggle with all his heart. He borrows from Boccacio his history of Palamon and Arcite, from Lollius his history of Troïlus and Cressida, and re-arranges them. How the two young Theban knights, Arcite and Palamon, both fall in love with the beautiful Emily, and how Arcite, victorious in tourney, falls and dies, bequeathing Emily to his rival; how the fine Trojan knight Troïlus wins the favours of Cressida, and how Cressida abandons him for Diomedes—these are still tales in verse, tales of love. A little long they may be; all the writings of this age, French, or imitated from French, are born of too prodigal minds; but how they glide along! A winding stream, which flows smoothly on level sand, and glitters now and again in the sun, is the only image we can find. The characters speak too much, but then they speak so well! Even when they dispute, we like to listen, their anger and offences are so wholly based on a happy overflow of unbroken converse. Remember Froissart, how slaughters, assassinations, plagues, the butcheries of the Jacquerie, the whole chaos of human misery, is forgotten in his fine uniform humour, so that the furious and raving figures seem but ornaments and choice embroiderings to relieve the train of shaded and coloured silk which forms the groundwork of his narrative!

But, in particular, a multitude of descriptions spread their gilding over all. Chaucer leads you among arms, palaces, temples, and halts before each scene. Here:

> 'The statue of Venus glorious for to see
> Was naked fleting in the large see,
> And fro the navel doun all covered was
> With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.
> A citole in hire right hand hadde she,
> And on hire hed, ful semely for to see,
> A rose gerlond fressh, and wel smelling,
> Above hire hed hire doves fleckering.'[1]

Further on, the temple of Mars:

> 'First on the wall was peinted a forest,
> In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,
> With knotty knarry barrein trees old
> Of stubbes and sharp and hidous to behold;
> In which ther ran a romble and a swough,
> As though a storme shuld bresten every bough:
> And dounward from an hill under a bent,
> Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotent,

[1] *Knight's Tale,* ii. p. 59, *v.* 1957–1964.

Wrought all of burned stele, of which th' entree
Was longe and streite, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and swiche a vise,
That it made all the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore shone,
For window on the wall ne was ther none,
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
The dore was all of athamant eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With yren tough, and for to make it strong,
Every piler the temple to sustene
Was tonne-gret, of yren bright and shene.'[1]

Everywhere on the wall were representations of slaughter; and in the sanctuary

'The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood, . . .
A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete
With eyen red, and of a man he ete.'[2]

Are not these contrasts well designed to rouse the imagination? You will meet in Chaucer a succession of similar pictures. Observe the train of combatants who came to joust in the tilting field for Arcite and Palamon:

'With him ther wenten knightes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an habergeon
And in a brestplate, and in a gipon;
And som wol have a pair of plates large;
And som wol have a Pruce sheld, or a targe,
Som wol ben armed on his legges wele,
And have an axe, and som a mace of stele. . . .
Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon
Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace:
Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his hed
They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
And like a griffon loked he about,
With kemped heres on his browes stout;
His limmes gret, his braunes hard and stronge,
His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.
And as the guise was in his contree,
Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he,
With foure white bolles in the trais.
Instede of cote-armure on his harnais,
With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.
His longe here was kempt behind his bak,
As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.
A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,
Upon his hed sate ful of stones bright,

[1] *Knight's Tale*, ii. p. 59, *v.* 1977–1996. [2] *Ibid.* p. 61, *v.* 2043–2050.

Of fine rubins and of diamants.
About his char ther wenten white alauns,
Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,
To hunten at the leon or the dere,
And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound,
Colered with gold, and torettes filed round.
An hundred lordes had he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,
Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,
Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles, white, and round and gretc.
His sadel was of brent gold new ybete;
A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging
Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
His crispe here like ringes was yronne,
And that was yelwe, and glitered as the sonne.
His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,
His lippes round, his colour was sanguin . . .
And as a leon he his loking caste.
Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.
His berd was well begonnen for to spring;
His vois was as a trompe thondering.
Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
A gerlond fresshe and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bare for his deduit
An egle tame, as any lily whit.
An hundred lordes had he with him there,
All armed save hir hedes in all hir gere,
Ful richely in alle manere thinges. . . .
About this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.'[1]

A herald would not describe them better nor more fully. The lords and ladies of the time would recognise here their tourneys and masquerades.

There is something more pleasant than a fine narrative, and that is a collection of fine narratives, especially when the narratives are all of different colourings. Froissart gives us such under the name of *Chronicles;* Boccacio still better; after him the lords of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles;* and, later still, Marguerite de Navarre. What more natural among people who meet, talk, and try to amuse themselves? The manners of the time suggest them; for the habits and tastes of society had begun, and fiction thus conceived only brings into books the conversations which are heard in the hall and by the wayside. Chaucer describes a troop of pilgrims, people of every rank, who are going to

[1] *Knight's Tale*, ii. p. 63, *v.* 2120-2188.

Canterbury: a knight, a sergeant of law, an Oxford clerk, a doctor, a miller, a prioress, a monk, who agree to relate a story all round:

> 'For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,
> To riden by the way domb as the ston.'

They relate accordingly; and on this slender and flexible thread all the jovialities of the feudal imagination, true and false, come and contribute their motley figures to the chain; alternately noble, chivalrous stories: the miracle of the infant whose throat was cut by Jews, the trials of patient Griselda, Canace and the marvellous fictions of Oriental fancy, obscene stories of marriage and monks, allegorical or moral tales, the fable of the cock and hen, a list of great unfortunate persons: Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Nebuchadnezzar, Zenobia, Crœsus, Ugolin, Peter of Spain. I leave out some, for I must be brief. Chaucer is like a jeweller with his hands full: pearls and glass beads, sparkling diamonds and common agates, black jet and ruby roses, all that history and imagination had been able to gather and fashion during three centuries in the East, in France, in Wales, in Provence, in Italy, all that had rolled his way, clashed together, broken or polished by the stream of centuries, and by the great jumble of human memory; he holds in his hand, arranges it, composes therefrom a long sparkling ornament, with twenty pendants, a thousand facets, which by its splendour, varieties, contrasts, may attract and satisfy the eyes of those most greedy for amusement and novelty.

He does more. The universal outburst of unchecked curiosity demands a more refined enjoyment; reverie and fantasy alone can satisfy it; not profound and thoughtful fantasy as we find it in Shakspeare, nor impassioned and meditated reverie as we find it in Dante, but the reverie and fantasy of the eyes, ears, external senses, which in poetry as in architecture call for singularity, wonders, accepted challenges, victories gained over what is rational and probable, and which are satisfied only by what is dense and dazzling. When you look at a cathedral of that time, you feel a sort of fear. Substance is wanting; the walls are hollowed out to make room for windows, the elaborate work of the porches, the wonderful growth of the slender columns, the thin curvature of arches—everything seems to totter; support has been withdrawn to give way to ornament. Without external prop or buttress, and artificial aid of iron clamp-work, the building would have crumbled to pieces on the first day: as it is, it undoes itself; we have to maintain on the spot a colony of masons continually to ward off the continual decay. But our eyes lose themselves in following the wavings and twistings of the endless fretwork; the dazzling centre-rose of the portal and the painted glass throw a diapered light on the carved stalls of the choir, the gold-work of the altar, the long array of damascened and glittering copes, the crowd of statues, gradually rising; and amid this violet light, this quivering purple, amid these arrows of gold which pierce the gloom, the building

is like the tail of a mystical peacock. So most of the poems of the time are barren of foundation; at most a trite morality serves them for mainstay: in short, the poet thought of nothing else than spreading out before us a glow of colours and a jumble of forms. They are dreams or visions; there are five or six in Chaucer, and you will meet more on your advance to the Renaissance. Yet the show is splendid. Chaucer is transported in a dream to a temple of glass,[1] where on the walls are figured in gold all the legends of Ovid and Virgil, an infinite train of characters and dresses, like that which, on the painted glass in the churches, still occupies the gaze of the faithful. Suddenly a golden eagle, which soars near the sun, and glitters like a carbuncle, descends with the swiftness of lightning, and carries him off in his talons above the stars, dropping him at last before the House of Fame, splendidly built of beryl, with shining windows and lofty turrets, and situated on a high rock of almost inaccessible ice. All the southern side was graven with the names of famous men, but the sun was continuously melting them. On the northern side, the names, better protected, still remained. On the turrets appeared the minstrels and jongleurs, with Orpheus, Orion, and the great harp-players, and behind them myriads of musicians, with horns, flutes, pipes, and reeds, in which they blew, and which filled the air; then all the charmers, magicians, and prophets. He enters, and in a high hall, wainscotted with gold, embossed with pearls, on a throne of carbuncle, he sees a woman seated, a 'gret and noble quene,' amidst an infinite number of heralds, whose embroidered cloaks bore the arms of the most famous knights in the world, and heard the sounds of instruments, and the celestial melody of Calliope and her sisters. From her throne to the gate stretched a row of pillars, on which stood the great historians and poets; Josephus on a pillar of lead and iron; Statius on a pillar of iron stained with blood; Ovid, 'Venus' clerk,' on a pillar of copper; then, on one higher than the rest, Homer and Livy, Dares the Phrygian, Guido Colonna, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the other historians of the war of Troy. Must I go on copying this phantasmagoria, in which confused erudition mars picturesque invention, and frequent banter shows sign that the vision is only a planned amusement? The poet and his reader have imagined for half an hour decorated halls and bustling crowds; a slender thread of common sense has ingeniously crept along the transparent golden mist which they amuse themselves with following. That suffices; they are pleased with their fleeting fancies, and ask nothing beyond.

Amid this exuberancy of mind, amid these refined cravings, and this insatiate exaltation of imagination and sense, there was the passion of love, which, combining all, was developed in excess, and displayed in short the sickly charm, the fundamental and fatal exaggeration, which are the characteristics of the age, and which, later, the Spanish civilisa-

[1] The House of Fame.

tion exhibits both in its flower and its decay. Long ago, the courts of love in Provence had established the theory. 'Each one who loves,' they said, 'grows pale at the sight of her whom he loves; each action of the lover ends in the thought of her whom he loves. Love can refuse nothing to love.'[1] This search after excessive sensation had ended in the ecstasies and transports of Guido Cavalcanti, and of Dante; and in Languedoc a company of enthusiasts had established themselves, love-penitents, who, in order to prove the violence of their passion, dressed in summer in furs and heavy garments, and in winter in light gauze, and walked thus about the country, so that many of them fell ill and died. Chaucer, in their wake, explained in his verses the craft of love,[2] the ten commandments, the twenty statutes of love, and praised his lady, his 'daies-eye,' his 'Margaruite,' his 'vermeil rose;' depicted love in ballads, visions, allegories, didactic poems, in a hundred guises. This is chivalrous, lofty love, as it was conceived in the middle age; above all, tender love. Troïlus loves Cressida like a troubadour; without Pandarus, her uncle, he would have languished, and ended by dying in silence. He will not reveal the name of her he loves. Pandarus has to tear it from him, perform all the bold actions himself, plan every kind of stratagem. Troïlus, however brave and strong in battle, can but weep before Cressida, ask her pardon, and faint. Cressida exhibits every delicacy. When Pandarus brings her Troïlus' first letter, she begins by refusing it, and is ashamed to open it: she opens it only because she is told the poor knight is about to die. At the first words 'all rosy hewed tho woxe she;' and though the letter is respectful, she will not answer it. She yields at last to the importunities of her uncle, and answer Troïlus that she will feel for him the affection of a sister. As to Troïlus, he trembles all over, grows pale when he sees the messenger return, doubts his happiness, and will not believe the assurance which is given him:

> 'But right so as these holtes and these hayis
> That han in winter dead ben and dry,
> Revesten hem in grene, whan that May is. . .
> Right in that selfe wise, sooth for to sey,
> Woxe suddainly his herte full of joy.'[3]

Slowly, after many pains, and thanks to the efforts of Pandarus, he obtains her confession; and in this confession what a delightful grace!

> 'And as the newe abashed nightingale,
> That stinteth first, whan she beginneth sing,
> Whan that she heareth any heerdes tale,
> Or in the hedges any wight stearing,
> And after siker doeth her voice outring:

[1] André le Chapelain, 1170.

[2] Also the *Court of Love*, and perhaps *The Assemble of Ladies* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

[3] *Troïlus and Cressida*, vol. v. bk. 3, p. 12.

Right so Creseide, whan that her drede stent,
Opened her herte, and told him her entent.'[1]

He, as soon as he perceived a hope from afar,

'In chaunged voice, right for his very drede,
Which voice eke quoke, and thereto his manere,
Goodly abasht, and now his hewes rede,
Now pale, unto Cresseide his ladie dere,
With look doun cast, and humble iyolden chere,
Lo, the alderfirst word that him astart
Was twice: "Mercy, mercy, O my sweet herte!"'[2]

This ardent love breaks out in impassioned accents, in bursts of happiness. Far from being regarded as a fault, it is the source of all virtue. Troïlus becomes braver, more generous, more upright, through it; his speech runs now on love and virtue; he scorns all villany; he honours those who possess merit, succours those who are in distress; and Cressida, delighted, repeats all day, with exceeding tenderness, this song, which is like the warbling of a nightingale:

'Whom should I thanken but you, god of love,
Of all this blisse, in which to bathe I ginne?
And thanked be ye, lorde, for that I love,
This is the right life that I am inne,
To flemen all maner vice and sinne:
This doeth me so to vertue for to entende
That daie by daie I in my will amende.
And who that saieth that for to love is vice, . . .
He either is envious, or right nice,
Or is unmightie for his shreudnesse
To loven. . . .
But I with all mine herte and all my might,
As I have saied, woll love unto my last,
My owne dere herte, and all mine owne knight,
In whiche mine herte growen is so fast,
And his in me, that it shall ever last.'[3]

But misfortune comes. Her father Calchas demands her back, and the Trojans decide that they will give her up in exchange for prisoners. At this news she swoons, and Troïlus is about to slay himself. Their love at this time seems imperishable; it sports with death, because it constitutes the whole of life. Beyond that better and delicious life which it created, it seems there can be no other:

'But as God would, of swough she abraide,
And gan to sighe, and Troïlus she cride,
And he answerde: "Lady mine, Creseide,
Live ye yet?" and let his swerde doun glide:
"Ye herte mine, that thanked be Cupide,"

[1] *Troïlus and Cressida*, vol. v. bk. 3, p. 40.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* vol. iv. bk. 2, p. 292.

(Quod she), and therewithal she sore sight,
And he began to glade her as he might.

Took her in armes two and kist her oft,
And her to glad, he did al his entent,
For which her gost, that flikered aie a loft,
Into her wofull herte ayen it went:
But at the last, as that her eye glent
Aside, anon she gan his sworde aspie,
As it lay bare, and gan for feare crie.

And asked him why had he it out draw,
And Troïlus anon the cause her told,
And how himself therwith he wold have slain,
For which Creseide upon him gan behold,
And gan him in her armes faste fold,
And said: "O mercy God, lo which a dede!
Alas, how nigh we weren bothe dede!"[1]

At last they are separated, with what words and what tears! and Troïlus, alone in his chamber, murmurs:

"Where is mine owne lady lefe and dere?
Where is her white brest, where is it, where?
Where been her armes, and her eyen clere
That yesterday this time with me were?" . . .
Nor there nas houre in al the day or night,
Whan he was ther as no man might him here,
That he ne sayd: "O lovesome lady bright,
How have ye faren sins that ye were there?
Welcome ywis mine owne lady dere!" . . .
Fro thence-forth he rideth up and doune,
And every thing came him to remembraunce,
As he rode forth by the places of the toune,
In which he whilom had all his pleasaunce:
"Lo, yonder saw I mine owne lady daunce,
And in that temple with her eien clere,
Me caught first my right lady dere.
And yonder have I herde full lustely
My dere herte laugh, and yonder play
Saw her ones eke ful blisfully,
And yonder ones to me gan she say,
'Now, good sweete, love me well I pray.'
And yonde so goodly gan she me behold,
That to the death mine herte is to her hold,
And at the corner in the yonder house
Herde I mine alderlevest lady dere,
So womanly, with voice melodiouse,
Singen so wel, so goodly, and so clere,
That in my soule yet me thinketh I here
The blissful sowne, and in that yonder place,
My lady first me toke unto her grace.'"[2]

[1] *Troïlus and Cressida*, vol. v. bk. 4, p. 97. [2] *Ibid.* bk. 5, p. 119 *et passim*

None has since found more true and tender words. These are the charming 'poetic branches' which flourished amid the gross ignorance and pompous parades. Human intelligence in the middle age had blossomed on that side where it perceived the light.

But mere narrative does not suffice to express his felicity and fancy; the poet must go where 'shoures sweet of rain descended soft,'

'And every plaine was clothed faire
With new greene, and maketh small floures
To springen here and there in field and in mede,
So very good and wholsome be the shoures,
That it renueth that was old and dede,
In winter time; and out of every sede
Springeth the hearbe, so that every wight
Of this season wexeth glad and light. . . .

In which (grove) were okes great, streight as a line,
Under the which the grasse so fresh of hew
Was newly sprong, and an eight foot or nine
Every tree well fro his fellow grew.'

He must forget himself in the vague felicity of the country, and, like Dante, lose himself in ideal light and allegory. The dreams of love, to continue true, must not take a too visible form, nor enter into a too consecutive history; they must float in a misty distance; the soul in which they hover cannot think of the laws of existence; it inhabits another world; it forgets itself in the ravishing emotion which troubles it, and sees its well-loved visions rise, mingle, come and go, as in summer we see the bees on a hill-slope flutter in a haze of light, and circle round and round the flowers.

One morning,[1] a lady sings, I entered at the dawn of day, I entered an oak-grove

'With branches brode, laden with leves new,
That sprongen out ayen the sunne-shene,
Some very red, and some a glad light grene. . . .[2]

And I, that all this pleasaunt sight sie,
Thought sodainly I felt so sweet an aire
Of the eglentere, that certainely
There is no hert, I deme, in such dispaire,
Ne with thoughts froward and contraire,
So overlaid, but it should soone have bote,
If it had ones felt this savour sote.

And as I stood, and cast aside mine eie,
I was ware of the fairest medler tree
That ever yet in all my life I sie,
As full of blossomes as it might be;
Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile

[1] *The Flower and the Leaf*, vi. p. 244, *v.* 6–32. [2] *Ibid.* p. 245, *v.* 38.

Fro bough to bough ; and, as him list, he eet
Here and there of buds and floures sweet. . . .

And as I sat, the birds harkening thus,
Methought that I heard voices sodainly,
The most sweetest and most delicious
That ever any wight, I trow truly,
Heard in their life, for the armony
And sweet accord was in so good musike,
That the voice to angels most was like.'[1]

Then she sees arrive 'a world of ladies . . . in surcotes white of velvet . . . set with emerauds . . . as of great pearles round and orient, and diamonds fine and rubies red.' And all had on their head 'a rich fret of gold . . . full of stately riche stones set,' with 'a chapelet of branches fresh and grene . . . some of laurer, some of woodbind, some of agnus castus;' and at the same time came a train of valiant knights in splendid array, with 'harneis' of red gold, shining in the sun, and noble steeds, with trappings 'of cloth of gold, and furred with ermine.' These knights and dames were the servants of the Leaf, and they sate under a great oak, at the feet of their queen.

From the other side came a bevy of ladies as resplendent as the first, but crowned with fresh flowers. These were the servants of the Flower. They alighted, and began to dance in the meadow. But heavy clouds appeared in the sky, and a storm broke out. They wished to shelter themselves under the oak, but there was no more room; they ensconced themselves as they could in the hedges and brambles ; the rain came down and spoiled their garlands, stained their robes, and washed away their ornaments ; when the sun returned, they went to ask succour from the queen of the Leaf; she, being merciful, consoled them, repaired the injury of the rain, and restored their original beauty. Then all disappears as in a dream.

The lady was astonished, when suddenly a fair dame appeared and instructed her. She learned that the servants of the Leaf had lived like brave knights, and those of the Flower had loved idleness and pleasure. She promises to serve the Leaf, and came away.

Is this an allegory? There is at least a lack of wit. There is no ingenious enigma ; it is dominated by fancy, and the poet thinks only of displaying in soft verse the fleeting and brilliant train which had amused his mind and charmed his eyes.

Chaucer himself, on the first of May, rises and goes out into the meadows. Love enters his heart with the warm sweet air; the landscape is transfigured, and the birds begin to speak :

'There sate I downe among the faire floure,
And saw the birds trip out of hir boure,

[1] *The Flower and the Leaf*, vi. p. 246, *v.* 78–133.

There as they rested hem all the night,
They were so joyfull of the dayes light,
They began of May for to done honoura.

They coud that service all by rote,
There was many a lovely note,
Some song loud as they had plained,
And some in other manner voice yfained
And some all out with the ful throte.

The proyned hem and made hem right gay,
And daunceden, and lepten on the spray,
And evermore two and two in fere,
Right so as they had chosen hem to yere,
In Feverere upon saint Valentines day.

And the river that I sate upon,
It made such a noise as it ron,
Accordaunt with the birdes armony,
Methought it was the best melody
That might ben yheard of any mon.'[1]

This confused harmony of vague noises troubles the sense; a secret languor enters the soul. The cuckoo throws his monotonous voice like a mournful and tender sigh between the white ash-tree boles; the nightingale makes his triumphant notes roll and rush above the leafy canopy; fancy breaks in unsought, and Chaucer hears them dispute of Love. They sing alternately an antistrophic song, and the nightingale weeps for vexation to hear the cuckoo speak in depreciation of Love. He is consoled, however, by the poet's voice, seeing that he also suffers with him:

'"For love and it hath doe me much wo."
"Ye, use" (quod she) "this medicine
Every day this May or thou dine
Go looke upon the fresh daisie,
And though thou be for wo in point to die,
That shall full greatly lessen thee of thy pine.

"And looke alway that thou be good and trew,
And I wol sing one of the songes new,
For love of thee, as loud as I may crie:"
And than she began this song full hie.
"I shrewe all hem that been of love untrue."'[2]

To such exquisite delicacies love, as with Petrarch, had carried poetry; by refinement even, as with Petrarch, it is lost now and then in its wit, conceits, clenches. But a marked characteristic at once separates it from Petrarch. Chaucer, if over-excited, is also graceful, polished, full of light banter, half-mockeries, fine sensual gaiety, some-

[1] *The Cuckow and Nightingale*, vi. p. 121, *v.* 37–85.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 126, *v.* 230–241.

what gossipy, as the French always paint love. He follows his true masters, and is himself an elegant speaker, facile, ever ready to smile, loving choice pleasures, a disciple of the *Roman de la Rose*, and much less Italian than French.[1] The bent of French character makes of love not a passion, but a gay feast, tastefully arranged, in which the service is elegant, the food exquisite, the silver brilliant, the two guests in full dress, in good humour, quick to anticipate and please each other, knowing how to keep up the gaiety, and when to part. In Chaucer, without doubt, this other altogether worldly view runs side by side with the sentimental element. If Troïlus is a weeping lover, his uncle Pandarus is a lively rascal, who volunteers for a singular service with amusing urgency, frank immorality, and carries it out carefully, gratuitously, thoroughly. In these pretty attempts Chaucer accompanies him as far as possible, and is not shocked. On the contrary, he makes fun out of it. At the critical moment, with transparent hypocrisy, he shelters himself under his character as author. If you find the particulars free, he says, it is not my fault; 'so writen clerks in hir bokes old,' and 'I mote, aftir min auctour, telle . . .' Not only is he gay, but he jests from end to end of the tale. He sees clearly through the tricks of feminine modesty; he laughs at it maliciously, knowing well what is behind; he seems to be saying, finger on lip: 'Hush! let the grand words roll on, you will be edified presently.' We are, in fact, edified; so is he, and in the nick of time he goes away, carrying the light: 'For ought I can aspies, this light nor I ne serven here of nought.' 'Troïlus,' says uncle Pandarus, 'if ye be wise, sweveneth not now, lest more folke arise.' Troïlus takes care not to swoon; and Cressida at last, being alone with him, speaks wittily and with prudent delicacy; there is here an exceeding charm, no coarseness. Their happiness covers all, even voluptuousness, as with profusion and perfume of heavenly roses. At most a slight spice of malice flavours it: 'and gode thrift he had full oft.' Troïlus holds his mistress in his arms: 'with worse hap God let us never mete.' The poet is almost as well pleased as they: for him, as for the men of his time, the sovereign good is love, not damped, but satisfied; they ended even by thinking such love a merit. The ladies declared in their judgments, that when one loved, one could refuse nothing to the beloved. Love has the force of law; it is inscribed in a code; they combine it with religion; and there is a sacrament of love, in which the birds in their anthems sing matins.[2] Chaucer curses with all his heart the covetous wretches, the business men, who treat it as a folly:

> 'As would God, tho wretches that despise
> Service of love had eares also long
> As had Mida, ful of covetise, . . .

[1] Stendhal, *On Love:* the difference of Love-taste and Love-passion.

[2] *The Court of Love*, about 1353 et seq. See also the *Testament of Love*

To teachen hem, that they been in the vice
And lovers not, although they hold hem nice,
. . . God yeve hem mischaunce,
And every lover in his trouth avaunce.'[1]

He clearly lacks severity, so rare in southern literature. The Italians in the middle age made joy into a virtue; and you perceive that the world of chivalry, as conceived by the French, expanded morality so as to confound it with pleasure.

IV.

There are other characteristics still more gay. The true Gallic literature crops up; obscene tales, practical jokes on one's neighbour, not shrouded in the Ciceronian style of Boccacio, but related lightly by a man in good humour;[2] above all, active malice, the trick of laughing at your neighbour's expense. Chaucer displays it better than Rutebeuf, and sometimes better than La Fontaine. He does not knock his men down; he pricks them as he passes, not from deep hatred or indignation, but through sheer nimbleness of disposition, and quick sense of the ridiculous; he throws his jokes at them by handfuls. His man of law is more a man of business than of the world:

'Nowher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.'[3]

His three burgesses:

'Everich, for the wisdom that he can
Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.
For catel hadden they ynough and rent,
And eke hir wives wolde it wel assent.'[4]

Of the mendicant Friar he says:

'His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote.'[5]

The mockery here comes from the heart, in the French manner, without effort, calculation, or vehemence. It is so pleasant and so natural to banter one's neighbour! Sometimes the lively vein becomes so abundant, that it furnishes an entire comedy, indelicate certainly, but so free and easy! Such a one is the portrait of the Wife of Bath, who has buried five husbands:

'Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew,
She was a worthy woman all hire live;
Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five,
Withouten other compagnie in youthe. . . .

[1] *Troïlus and Cressida*, vol. v. iii. pp. 44, 45.

[2] The story of the pear-tree (Merchant's Tale), and of the cradle (Reeve's Tale), for instance, in the *Canterbury Tales*.

[3] *Ibid. prol.* v. 10, *v.* 323. [4] *Ibid.* p. 12, *v.* 373. [5] *Ibid.* t. 21 v 688.

In all the parish wif ne was ther non,
That to the offring before hire shulde gon,
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.'[1]

What a tongue she has! Impertinent, full of vanity, bold, chattering, unbridled, she silences everybody, and holds forth for an hour before coming to her tale. We hear her grating, high-pitched, loud, clear voice, wherewith she deafened her husbands. She continually harps upon the same ideas, repeats her reasons, piles them up and confounds them, like a stubborn mule who runs along shaking and ringing his bells, so that the stunned listeners remain open-mouthed, wondering that a single tongue can spin out so many words. The subject was worth the trouble. She proves that she did well to marry five husbands, and she proves it clearly, like a woman used to arguing:

'God bad us for to wex and multiplie;
That gentil text can I wel understond;
Eke wel I wot, he sayd, that min husbond
Shuld leve fader and moder, and take to me;
But of no noumbre mention made he,
Of bigamie or of octogamie;
Why shuld men than speke of it vilanie?
Lo here the wise king Dan Solomon,
I trow he hadde wives mo than on,
(As wolde God it leful were to me
To be refreshed half so oft as he,)
Which a gift of God had he for alle his wives? . . .
Blessed be God that I have wedded five.
Welcome the sixthe whan that ever he shall. . . .
He (Christ) spake to hem that wold live parfitly,
And lordings, (by your leve) that am nat I;
I wol bestow the flour of all myn age
In th' actes and the fruit of mariage. . . .
An husbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which shal be both my dettour and my thrall,
And have his tribulation withall
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wif.'[2]

Here Chaucer has the freedom of Molière, and we possess it no longer. His good wife justifies marriage in terms just as technical as Sganarelle. It behoves us to turn the pages quickly, and follow in the lump only this Odyssey of marriage. The experienced wife, who has journeyed through life with five husbands, knows the art of taming them, and relates how she persecuted them with jealousy, suspicion, grumbling, quarrels, blows given and received; how the husband, non-

[1] *Canterbury Tales* ii. *prologue*, p. 14, *v.* 460.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, p. 168, *v.* 5610-5739.

plussed by the continuity of the tempest, stooped at last, accepted the halter, and turned the domestic mill like a conjugal and resigned ass:

'For as an hors, I coude bite and whine;
I coude plain, and I was in the gilt. . . .
I plained first, so was our werre ystint.
They were ful glad to excusen hem ful blive
Of thing, the which they never agilt hir live. . . .
I swore that all my walking out by night
Was for to espien wenches that he dight. . . .
For though the pope had sitten hem beside,
I wold not spare hem at hir owen bord. . . .
But certainly I made folk swiche chere,
That in his owen grese I made him frie
For anger, and for veray jalousie.
By God, in erth I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie.'[1]

She saw the fifth first at the burial of the fourth:

'And Jankin oure clerk was on of tho:
As helpe me God, whan that I saw him go
Aftir the bere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet, so clene and faire,
That all my herte I yave unto his hold.
He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was fourty, if I shal say soth. . . .
As helpe me God, I was a lusty on,
And faire, and riche, and yonge, and well begon.'[2]

What a speech! Was human delusion ever more happily painted? How lifelike is all, and how facile! It is the satire of marriage. You will find it twenty times in Chaucer. Nothing more is wanted to exhaust the two subjects of French mockery, than to unite with the satire of marriage the satire of religion.

It is here; and Rabelais is not more bitter. The monk whom Chaucer paints is a hypocrite, a jolly fellow, who knows good inns and jovial hosts better than the poor and the houses of charity:

'A Frere there was, a wanton and a mery . . .
Ful wel beloved, and familier was he
With frankeleins over all in his contree,
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun. . . .
Full swetely herde he confession,
And plesant was his absolution.
He was an esy man to give penance,
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance:
For unto a poure ordre for to give
Is signe that a man is wel yshrive. . . .
And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,

[1] *Canterbury Tales*, ii. *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, p. 179 *v.* 5968–6072.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 185, *v.* 6177–6188.

And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
Better than a lazar and a beggere. . . .
It is not honest, it may not avance,
As for to delen with no swich pouraille,
But all with riche and sellers of vitaille. . . .
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe, although him sore smerte.
Therfore in stede of weping and praieres,
Men mote give silver to the poure freres.'[1]

This lively irony had an exponent before in Jean de Meung. But Chaucer pushes it further, and sets it in action. His monk begs from house to house, holding out his wallet:

'In every hous he gan to pore and prie,
And begged mele and chese, or elles corn. . . .
"Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese,
Or elles what you list, we may not chese;
A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny;
Or yeve us of your braun, if ye have any,
A dagon of your blanket, leve dame,
Our suster dere, (lo here I write your name)." . . .
And whan that he was out at dore, anon,
He planed away the names everich on.'[2]

He has kept for the end of his tour, Thomas, one of his most liberal clients. He finds him in bed, and ill; here is an excellent fruit to suck and squeeze:

'"God wot," quod he, "laboured have I ful sore,
And specially for thy salvation,
Have I sayd many a precious orison. . . .
I have this day ben at your chirche at messe . . .
And ther I saw our dame, a, wher is she?"'[3]

The dame enters:

'This frere ariseth up ful curtisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kisseth hire swete and chirketh as a sparwe.'[4] . . .

Then, in his sweetest and most caressing voice, he compliments her, and says:

'"Thanked be God that you yaf soule and lif,
Yet saw I not this day so faire a wif
In all the chirche, God so save me."'[5]

Have we not here already Tartuffe and Elmire? But the monk is with a farmer, and can go more straight and quick to his task. Compliments

[1] *Canterbury Tales, prologue*, ii. p. 7, *v.* 208 *et passim.*
[2] *Ibid. The Sompnoures Tale*, ii. p. 220, *v.* 7319–7340.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 221 *v.* 7366. [4] *Ibid.* p. 221, *v.* 7384. [5] *Ibid.* p. 222, *v* 7389.

ended, he thinks of the substance, and asks the lady to let him talk alone with Thomas. He must inquire after the state of his soul:

> '"I wol with Thomas speke a litel throw:
> Thise curates ben so negligent and slow
> To gropen tendrely a conscience. . . .
> Now, dame," quod he, "*jeo vous die sanz doute*,
> Have I nat of a capon but the liver,
> And of your white bred nat but a shiver,
> And after that a rosted pigges hed,
> (But I ne wolde for me no beest were ded,)
> Than had I with you homly suffisance.
> I am a man of litel sustenance,
> My spirit hath his fostring in the Bible.
> My body is ay so redy and penible
> To waken, that my stomak is destroied."'[1]

Poor man, he raises his hands to heaven, and ends with a sigh

The wife tells him her child died a fortnight before. Straightway he composes a miracle; was he not earning his money? He had a revelation of this death in the 'dortour' of the convent; he saw the child carried to paradise; he rose with his brothers, 'with many a tere trilling on our cheke,' and they sang a Te Deum:

> '"For, sire and dame, trusteth me right wel,
> Our orisons ben more effectuel,
> And more we seen of Cristes secree thinges
> Than borel folk, although that they be kinges.
> We live in poverte, and in abstinence,
> And borel folk in richesse and dispence. . . .
> Lazar and Dives liveden diversely,
> And divers guerdon hadden they therby."'[2]

Presently he spurts out a whole sermon, in monkish style, with manifest intention. The sick man, wearied, replies that he has already given half his fortune to all kinds of monks, and yet he continually suffers. Listen to the grieved exclamation, the true anger of the mendicant monk, who sees himself threatened by the meeting with a brother to share his client, his revenue, his booty, his food-supplies:

> 'The frere answered: "O Thomas, dost thou so?
> What nedeth you diverse freres to seche?
> What nedeth him that hath a parfit leche,
> To sechen other leches in the toun?
> Your inconstance is your confusion.
> Hold ye than me, or elles our covent,
> To pray for you ben insufficient?
> Thomas, that jape n' is not worth a mite,
> Your maladie is for we han to lite."'[3]

[1] *Canterbury Tales*, ii. *The Sompnoures Tale*, p. 222, *v.* 7397–7429.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 223 *v.* 7450–7460. [3] *Ibid.* p. 226, *v.* 7536–7544.

Recognise the great orator; he employs even the grand style to keep the supplies from being cut off:

> '"A, yeve that covent half a quarter otes;
> And yeve that covent four and twenty grotes;
> And yeve that frere a peny, and let him go:
> Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
> What is a ferthing worth parted on twelve?
> Lo, eche thing that is oned in himselve
> Is more strong, than whan it is yscatered . . .
> Thou woldest han our labour al for nought."'[1]

Then he begins again his sermon in a louder tone, shouting at each word, quoting examples from Seneca and the classics, a terrible fluency, a trick of his trade, which, diligently applied, must draw money from the patient. He asks for gold, 'to make our cloistre,'

> '. . . "And yet, God wot, uneth the fundament
> Parfourmed is, ne of our pavement
> N' is not a tile yet within our wones:
> By God, we owen fourty pound for stones.
> Now help, Thomas, for him that harwed helle,
> For elles mote we oure bokes selle,
> And if ye lacke oure predication,
> Than goth this world all to destruction.
> For who so fro this world wold us bereve,
> So God me save, Thomas, by your leve,
> He wold bereve out of this world the sonne."'[2]

In the end, Thomas, in a rage, promises him a gift, tells him to put his hand in the bed and take it, and sends him away duped, mocked, and defiled.

We have descended now to popular farce: when amusement must be had at any price, it is sought, as here, in broad jokes, even in filthiness. We can see how these two coarse and vigorous plants have blossomed in the dung of the middle age. Planted by the cunning men of Champagne and Ile-de-France, watered by the *trouvères*, they were destined fully to expand, bespattered and ruddy, in the hands of Rabelais. Meanwhile Chaucer plucks his nosegay from it. Deceived husbands, tricked innkeepers, accidents in bed, kicks, and robberies,—these suffice to raise a hearty laugh. Side by side with noble pictures of chivalry, he gives us a train of Flemish grotesque figures, carpenters, joiners, friars, summoners; blows abound, fists descend on fleshy backs; many nudities are shown; they swindle one another out of their corn, their wives; they pitch one another out of a window; they brawl and quarrel. A bruise, a piece of open filthiness, passes in such society for a sign of wit. The summoner, being rallied by the friar, gives him tit for tat:

[1] *Canterbury Tales*, ii. *The Sompnoures Tale*, p. 226, *v.* 7545–7553

[2] *Ibid.* p. 230, *v.* 7685–7695.

"'This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,
And, God it wot, that is but litel wonder,
Freres and fendes ben but litel asonder.
For parde, ye han often time herd telle
How that a Frere ravished was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an angel lad him up and doun,
To shewen him the peines that ther were, . . .
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
(And now hath Sathanas," saith he, "a tayl
Broder than of a carrike is the sayl.)
Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas, quod he,
. and let the Frere see
Wher is the nest of Freres in this place.
And er than half a furlong way of space,
Right so as bees out swarmen of an hive,
Out of the devils . . . ther gonnen to drive,
A twenty thousand Freres on a route,
And thurghout hell they swarmed al aboute,
And com agen, as fast as they may gon.'"[1]

Such were the coarse buffooneries of the popular imagination.

V.

It is high time to return to Chaucer himself. Beyond the two notable characteristics which settle his place in his age and school of poetry, there are others which take him out of his age and school. If he was romantic and gay like the rest, it was after a fashion of his own. He observes characters, notes their differences, studies the coherence of their parts, endeavours to bring forward living and distinct persons,—a thing unheard of in his time, but which the renovators in the sixteenth century, and first amongst them Shakspeare, will do afterwards. It is the English positive good sense, and aptitude for seeing the inside of things, beginning to appear. A new spirit, almost manly, pierces through, in literature as in painting, with Chaucer as with Van Eyck, with both at the same time; no longer the childish imitation of chivalrous life[2] or monastic devotion, but the grave spirit of inquiry and craving for deep truths, whereby art becomes complete. For the first time, in Chaucer as in Van Eyck, character stands out in relief; its parts are held together; it is no longer an unsubstantial phantom. You may comprehend its past and see its present action. Its externals manifest the personal and incommunicable details of its inner nature, and the infinite complexity of its economy and motion. To this day, after four centuries, that character is individualised, and typical; it remains distinct in our memory, like the creations of Shakspeare and

[1] *Canterbury Tales*, ii. *The Sompnour's Prologue*, p. 217, *v.* 7254–7279.

[2] See in *The Canterbury Tales* the Rhyme of Sir Topas, a parody on the chivalric histories. Each character there seems a precursor of Cervantes.

Rubens. We observe this growth in the very act. Not only does Chaucer, like Boccacio, bind his tales into a single history; but in addition—and this is wanting in Boccacio—he begins with the portrait of all his narrators, knight, summoner, man of law, monk, bailiff or reeve, host, about thirty distinct figures, of every sex, condition, age, each painted with his disposition, face, costume, turns of speech, little significant actions, habits, antecedents, each maintained in his character by his talk and subsequent actions, so well, that we can discern here, before any other nation, the germ of the domestic novel as we write it to-day. Think of the portraits of the franklin, the miller, the mendicant friar, and merchant. There are plenty of others which show the broad brutalities, the coarse tricks, and the pleasantries of vulgar life, as well as the gross and plentiful feastings of sensual life. Here and there honest old soldiers, who double their fists, and tuck up their sleeves; or the contented beadles, who, when they have drunk, will speak nothing but Latin. But by the side of these there are select characters; the knight, who went on a crusade to Granada and Prussia, brave and courteous:

'And though that he was worthy he was wise,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
In alle his lif, unto no manere wight,
He was a veray parfit gentil knight.'[1]

'With him, ther was his sone, a yonge Squier,
A lover, and a lusty bacheler,
With lockes crull as they were laide in presse.
Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.
And he hadde be somtime in chevachie,
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Alle ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
He was as fresshe, as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with sleves long and wide.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.
He coude songes make, and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
So hote he loved, that by nightertale
He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
Curteis he was, lowly and servisable,
And carf befor his fader at the table.'[2]

There is also a poor and learned clerk of Oxford; and finer still, and

[1] Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, ii. p. 3, v. 68–72. [2] *Ibid.* p. 3, v. 79–100.

more worthy of a modern hand, the Prioress, 'Madame Eglantine,' who as a nun, a maiden, a great lady, is ceremonious, and shows sign of exquisite taste. Would a better be found now-a-days in a German chapter, amid the most modest and lively bevy of sentimental and literary canonesses?

'Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;
Hire gretest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy;
And she was cleped Madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the service devine,
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford-atte-bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.
In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.
Hir over lippe wiped she so clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught,
Ful semely after hire mete she raught.
And sikerly she was of grete disport,
And ful plesant, and amiable of port,
And peined hire to contrefeten chere
Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.'[1]

Are you offended by these provincial affectations? On the contrary, it is delightful to behold these nice and pretty ways, these little affectations, the waggery and prudery, the half-worldly, half-monastic smile. We inhale a delicate feminine perfume, preserved and grown old under the stomacher:

'But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede.
But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert:
And all was conscience and tendre herte.'[2]

Many elderly ladies throw themselves into such affections as these, for lack of others. Elderly! what an objectionable word have I employed! She was not elderly:

[1] Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, ii. p. 4, *v.* 118–141. [2] *Ibid.* p. 5, *v* 142–150

'Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was,
Hire nose tretis; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red;
But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe;
For hardily she was not undergrowe.
Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of small corall aboute hire arm she bare
A pair of bedes, gauded al with grene;
And thereon heng a broche of gold ful shene,
On whiche was first ywriten a crouned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*'[1]

A pretty ambiguous device for gallantry or devotion; the lady was both of the world and the cloister: of the world, you may see it in her dress; of the cloister, you gather it from 'another Nonne also with hire hadde she, that was hire chapelleine, and Preestes thre;' from the Ave Maria which she sings, the long edifying stories which she relates. She is like a fresh, sweet, and ruddy cherry, made to ripen in the sun, but which, preserved in an ecclesiastical jar, is candied and made insipid in the syrup.

Such is the reflection which begins to dawn, such the high art. Chaucer studies here, rather than aims at amusement; he ceases to gossip, and thinks; instead of surrendering himself to the facility of glowing improvisation, he plans. Each tale is suited to the teller: the young squire relates a fantastic and Oriental history; the tipsy miller a loose and comical story; the honest clerk the touching legend of Griselda. All these tales are bound together, and that much better than by Boccacio, by little veritable incidents, which spring from the characters of the personages, and such as we light upon in our travels. The horsemen ride on in good humour in the sunshine, in the open country; they converse. The miller has drunk too much ale, and will speak, 'and for no man forbere.' The cook goes to sleep on his beast, and they play practical jokes on him. The monk and the summoner get up a dispute about their respective lines of business. The host restores peace, makes them speak or be silent, like a man who has long presided in the inn parlour, and who has often had to check brawlers. They pass judgment on the stories they listen to: declaring that there are few Griseldas in the world; laughing at the misadventures of the tricked carpenter; drawing a lesson from the moral tale. The poem is no longer, as in contemporary literature, a mere procession, but a painting in which the contrasts are arranged, the attitudes chosen, the general effect calculated, so that life is invigorated; we forget ourselves at the sight, as in the case of every life-like work; and we conceive the desire to get on horseback on a fine sunny morning, and

[1] Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, v. 151–162.

canter along green meadows with the pilgrims to the shrine of the good saint of Canterbury.

Weigh the value of this general effect. Is it a dream or not, in its maturity or infancy? The whole future is before us. Savages or half savages, warriors of the Heptarchy or knights of the middle-age; up to this period, no one had reached to this point. They had strange emotions, tender at times, and they expressed them each according to the gift of his race, some by short cries, others by continuous babble. But they did not command or guide their impressions; they sang or conversed by impulse, at hazard, according to the bent of their disposition, leaving their ideas to present themselves, and to take the lead; and when they hit upon order, it was ignorantly and involuntarily. Here for the first time appears a superiority of intellect, which at the instant of conception suddenly halts, rises above itself, passes judgment, and says to itself, 'This phrase tells the same thing as the last—remove it; these two ideas are disjointed—bind them together; this description is feeble—reconsider it.' When a man can speak thus he has an idea, not learned in the schools, but personal and practical, of the human mind, its process and needs, and of things also, their composition and combinations; he has a style, that is, he is capable of making everything understood and seen by the human mind. He can extract from every object, landscape, situation, character, the special and significant marks, so as to group and arrange them, to compose an artificial work which surpasses the natural work in its purity and completeness. He is capable, as Chaucer was, of seeking out in the old common forest of the middle-ages, stories and legends, to replant them in his own soil, and make them send out new shoots. He has the right and the power, as Chaucer had, of copying and translating, because by dint of retouching he impresses on his translations and copies his original mark; he recreates what he imitates, because through or by the side of worn-out fancies and monotonous stories, he can display, as Chaucer did, the charming ideas of an amiable and elastic mind, the thirty master-forms of the fourteenth century, the splendid freshness of the moist landscape and spring-time of England. He is not far from conceiving an idea of truth and life. He is on the brink of independent thought and fertile discovery. This was Chaucer's position. At the distance of a century and a half, he has affinity with the poets of Elizabeth[1] by his gallery of pictures, and with the reformers of the sixteenth century by his portrait of the good parson.

Affinity merely. He advanced a few steps beyond the threshold of

[1] Tennyson, in his *Dream of Fair Women*, sings:

'Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.'—TR.

his art, but he paused in the vestibule. He half opens the great door of the temple, but does not take his seat there; at most, he sat down at intervals. In *Arcite and Palamon*, in *Troïlus and Cressida*, he sketches sentiments, but does not create characters; he easily and ingeniously traces the winding course of events and conversations, but does not mark the precise outline of a striking figure. If occasionally, as in the description of the temple of Mars, after the *Thebaid* of Statius, feeling at his back the glowing breeze of poetry, he draws out his feet, clogged with the mud of the middle-age, and at a bound stands upon the poetic plain on which Statius imitated Virgil and equalled Lucan, he, at other times, again falls back into the childish gossip of the trouvères, or the stale pedantry of learned clerks—to 'Dan Phebus or Apollo-Delphicus.' Elsewhere, a commonplace remark on art intrudes in the midst of an impassioned description. He uses three thousand verses to conduct Troïlus to his first interview. He is like a precocious and poetical child, who mingles in his love-dreams quotations from his prayer-book and recollections of his alphabet.[1] Even in the *Canterbury Tales* he repeats himself, unfolds artless developments, forgets to concentrate his passion or his idea. He begins a jest, and scarcely ends it. He dilutes a bright colouring in a monotonous stanza. His voice is like that of a boy breaking into manhood. At first a manly and firm accent is maintained, then a shrill sweet sound shows that his growth is not finished, and that his strength is subject to weakness. Chaucer sets out as if to quit the middle-age; but in the end he is there still. To-day he composes the *Canterbury Tales;* yesterday he was translating the *Roman de la Rose.* To-day he is studying the complicated machinery of the heart, discovering the issues of primitive education or of the ruling disposition, and realising the comedy of manners; to-morrow, he will have no pleasure but in curious events, smooth allegories, amorous discussions, imitated from the French, or learned moralities from the ancients. Alternately he is an observer and a trouvère; instead of the step he ought to have advanced, he has but made a half-step.

Who has prevented him, and the others who surround him? We meet with the obstacle in his tale of *Melibeus*, of the *Parson*, in his *Testament of Love;* in short, so long as he writes verse, he is at his ease; as soon as he takes to prose, a sort of chain winds around his feet and stops him. His imagination is free, and his reasoning a slave. The rigid scholastic divisions, the mechanical manner of arguing and

[1] Speaking of Cressida, IV., book i. p. 236, he says:

'Right as our first letter is now an a,
In beautie first so stood she makeles,
Her goodly looking gladed all the prees,
Nas never seene thing to be praised so derre,
Nor under cloude blacke so bright a sterre.'

replying, the ergo, the Latin quotations, the authority of Aristotle and the Fathers, come and weigh down his budding thought. His native invention disappears under the discipline imposed. The servitude is so heavy, that even in his *Testament of Love*, amid the most touching plaints and the most smarting pains, the beautiful ideal lady whom he has always served, the heavenly mediator who appears to him in a vision, Love, sets her theses, establishes that the cause of a cause is the cause of the thing caused, and reasons as pedantically as they would at Oxford. In what can talent, even genius, end, when it loads itself with such shackles? What succession of original truths and new doctrines could be found and proved, when in a moral tale, like that of *Melibeus* and his wife Prudence, it was thought necessary to establish a formal controversy, to quote Seneca and Job, to forbid tears, to bring forward the weeping Christ to authorise tears, to enumerate every proof, to call in Solomon, Cassiodorus, and Cato; in short, to write a book for schools? The public has only pleasant and lively thoughts; not serious and general ideas; they are retained in the possession of others. As soon as Chaucer gets into a reflective mood, straightway Saint Thomas, Peter Lombard, the manual of sins, the treatise on definition and syllogism, the army of the ancients and of the Fathers, descend from their glory, enter his brain, speak in his stead; and the trouvère's amiable voice becomes, though he has no suspicion of it, the dogmatic and sleep-inspiring voice of a doctor. In love and satire he has experience, and he invents; in what regards morality and philosophy he has learning, and remembers. For an instant, by a solitary leap, he entered upon the close observation and the genuine study of man; he could not keep his ground, he did not take his seat, he took a poetic excursion; and no one followed him. The level of the century is lower; he is on it himself for the most part. He is in the company of narrators like Froissart, of elegant speakers like Charles of Orléans, of gossipy and barren verse-writers like Gower, Lydgate, and Occleve. There is no fruit, but frail and fleeting blossom, many useless branches, still more dying or dead branches; such is this literature. And why? Because it had no longer a root; after three centuries of effort, a heavy instrument cut it underground. This instrument was the Scholastic Philosophy.

VI.

Beneath every literature there is a philosophy. Beneath every work of art is an idea of nature and of life; this idea leads the poet. Whether the author knows it or not, he writes in order to exhibit it; and the characters which he fashions, like the events which he arranges, only serve to bring to light the dim creative conception which raises and combines them. Underlying Homer appears the noble life of heroic paganism and of happy Greece. Underlying Dante, the sad and violent life of fanatical Catholicism and of the much-hating Italians. From either we

might draw a theory of man and of the beautiful. It is so with others; and this is how, according to the variations, the birth, blossom, death, or sluggishness of the master-idea, literature varies, is born, flourishes, degenerates, comes to an end. Whoever plants the one, plants the other; whoever undermines the one, undermines the other. Place in all the minds of any age a new grand idea of nature and life, so that they feel and produce it with their whole heart and strength, and you will see them, seized with the craving to express it, invent forms of art and groups of figures. Take away from these minds every grand new idea of nature and life, and you will see them, deprived of the craving to express all-important thoughts, copy, sink into silence, or rave.

What has become of these all-important thoughts? What labour worked them out? What studies nourished them? The labourers did not lack zeal. In the twelfth century the energy of their minds was admirable. At Oxford there were thirty thousand scholars. No building in Paris could contain the crowd of Abelard's disciples; when he retired to solitude, they accompanied him in such a multitude, that the desert became a town. No suffering repulsed them. There is a story of a young boy, who, though beaten by his master, was wholly bent on remaining with him, that he might still learn. When the terrible encyclopedia of Aristotle was introduced, all disfigured and unintelligible, it was devoured. The only question presented to them, that of universals, so abstract and dry, so embarrassed by Arabic obscurities and Greek subtilties, during three centuries, was seized upon eagerly. Heavy and awkward as was the instrument supplied to them, I mean syllogism, they made themselves masters of it, rendered it still more heavy, used it upon every object, in every sense. They constructed monstrous books, by multitudes, cathedrals of syllogism, of unheard of architecture, of prodigious exactness, heightened in effect by intensity of intellectual power, which the whole sum of human labour has only twice been able to match.[1] These young and valiant minds thought they had found the temple of truth; they rushed at it headlong, in legions, breaking in the doors, clambering over the walls, leaping into the interior, and so found themselves at the bottom of a moat. Three centuries of labour at the bottom of this black moat added no single idea to the human mind.

For consider the questions which they treat of. They seem to be marching, but are merely marking time. One would say, to see them moil and toil, that they will educe from heart and brain some great original creed; all belief was imposed upon them from the outset.

[1] Under Proclus and Hegel. Duns Scotus, at the age of thirty-one, died, leaving beside his sermons and commentaries, twelve folio volumes, in a small close handwriting, in a style like Hegel's, on the same subject as Proclus treats of. Similarly with Saint Thomas and the whole train of schoolmen. No idea can be formed of such a labour before handling the books themselves.

The system was made; they could only arrange and comment upon it. The conception comes not from them, but from Constantinople. Infinitely complicated and subtle as it is, the finishing work of Oriental mysticism and Greek metaphysics, so disproportioned to their young understanding, they exhaust themselves to reproduce it, and moreover burden their unpractised hands with the weight of a logical instrument which Aristotle created for theory and not for practice, and which ought to have remained in a cabinet of philosophical curiosities, without being ever carried into the field of action. 'Whether the divine essence engendered the Son, or was engendered by the Father; why the three persons together are not greater than one alone; attributes determine persons, not substance, that is, nature; how properties can exist in the nature of God, and not determine it; if created spirits are local and circumscribed; if God can know more things than He is aware of;'[1]—these are the ideas which they moot: what truth could issue thence? From hand to hand the chimera grows, and spreads wider its gloomy wings. 'Can God cause that, the place and body being retained, the body shall have no position, that is, existence in place?—Whether the impossibility of being engendered is a constituent property of the First Person of the Trinity—Whether identity, similitude, and equality are real relations in God.'[2] Duns Scotus distinguishes three kinds of matter: matter which is firstly first, secondly first, thirdly first. According to him, we must clear this triple hedge of thorny abstractions in order to understand the production of a sphere of brass. Under such a regimen, imbecility soon makes its appearance. Saint Thomas himself considers, 'whether the body of Christ arose with its wounds,—whether this body moves with the motion of the host and the chalice in consecration,—whether at the first instant of conception Christ had the use of free judgment,—whether Christ was slain by Himself or by another?' Do you think you are at the limits of human folly? Listen. He considers 'whether the dove in which the Holy Spirit appeared was a real animal,—whether a glorified body can occupy one and the same place at the same time as another glorified body,—whether in the state of innocence all children were masculine?' I pass over others as to the digestion of Christ, and some still more untranslatable.[3] This is the point reached by the most esteemed doctor, the most judicious mind, the Bossuet of the middle-age. Even in this ring of inanities the

[1] Peter Lombard, *Book of Sentences*. It was the classic of the middle-age.

[2] Duns Scotus, ed. 1639.

[3] Utrum angelus diligat se ipsum dilectione naturali vel electiva? Utrum in statu innocentiæ fuerit generatio per coitum? Utrum omnes fuissent nati in sexu masculino? Utrum cognitio angeli posset dici matutina et vespertina? Utrum martyribus aureola debeatur? Utrum virgo Maria fuerit virgo in concipiendo? Utrum remanserit virgo post partum? The reader would do well to look out in the text the reply to these last two questions. (S. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. 1677.)

answers are laid down. Roscelin and Abelard were excommunicated, exiled, imprisoned, because they swerved from it. There is a complete minute dogma which closes all issues; there is no means of escaping; after a hundred wriggles and a hundred efforts, you must come and tumble into a formula. If by mysticism you try to fly over their heads, if by experience you endeavour to creep beneath, powerful talons await you at your exit. The wise man passes for a magician, the enlightened man for a heretic. The Waldenses, the Cathari, the disciples of John of Parma, were burned; Roger Bacon died only just in time, otherwise he might have been burned. Under this constraint men ceased to think; for he who speaks of thought, speaks of an effort at invention, an individual creation, an energetic action. They recite a lesson, or sing a catechism; even in paradise, even in ecstasy and the divinest raptures of love, Dante thinks himself bound to show an exact memory and a scholastic orthodoxy. How then with the rest? Some, like Raymond Lully, set about inventing an instrument of reasoning to serve in place of the understanding. About the fourteenth century, under the blows of Occam, this verbal science began to totter; they saw that it had no other substance but one of words; it was discredited. In 1367, at Oxford, of thirty thousand students, there remained six thousand; they still set their Barbara and Felapton, but only in the way of routine. Each one in turn mechanically traversed the petty region of threadbare cavils, scratched himself in the briars of quibbles, and burdened himself with his bundle of texts; nothing more. The vast body of science which was to have formed and vivified the whole thought of man, was reduced to a text-book.

So, little by little, the conception which fertilised and ruled all others, dried up; the deep spring, whence flowed all poetic streams, was found empty; science furnished nothing more to the world. What further works could the world produce? As Spain, later on, renewing the middle-age, after having shone splendidly and vainly by her chivalry and devotion, by Lope de Vega and Calderon, Loyola and St. Theresa, became enervated through the Inquisition and through casuistry, and ended by sinking into a brutish silence; so the middle-age, outstripping Spain, after displaying the senseless heroism of the crusades, and the poetical ecstasy of the cloister, after producing chivalry and saintship, Francis of Assisi, St. Louis, and Dante, languished under the Inquisition and the scholastic learning, and became extinguished in idle raving and inanity.

Must we quote all these good people who speak without having anything to say? You may find them in Warton;[1] dozens of translators, importing the poverties of French literature, and imitating imitations; rhyming chroniclers, most commonplace of men, whom we only read because we must accept history from every quarter,

[1] *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. ii.

even from imbeciles; spinners and spinsters of didactic stories, who pile up verses on the training of falcons, on armour, on chemistry; editors of moralities, who invent the same dream over again for the hundredth time, and get themselves taught universal history by the goddess Sapience. Like the writers of the Latin decadence, these folk only think of copying, compiling, abridging, constructing text-books, in rhymed memoranda, the encyclopedia of their times.

Will you hear the most illustrious, the grave Gower — 'moral Gower,' as he was called?[1] Doubtless here and there he contains a remnant of brilliancy and grace. He is like an old secretary of a Court of Love, André le Chapelain or any other, who would pass the day in solemnly registering the sentences of ladies, and in the evening, partly asleep on his desk, would see in a half-dream their sweet smile and their beautiful eyes.[2] The ingenious but exhausted vein of Charles of Orléans still flows in his French ballads. He has the same fine delicacy, almost a little finicky. The poor little poetic spring flows yet in thin transparent films under the smooth pebbles, and murmurs with a babble, pretty, but so weak that at times you cannot hear it. But dull is the rest! His great poem, *Confessio Amantis*, is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, imitated chiefly from Jean de Meung, having for object, like the *Roman de la Rose*, to explain and classify the impediments of love. The superannuated theme is always reappearing, and beneath it an indigested erudition. You will find here an exposition of hermetic science, a treatise on the philosophy of Aristotle, a discourse on politics, a litany of ancient and modern legends gleaned from the compilers, marred in the passage by the pedantry of the schools and the ignorance of the age. It is a cart-load of scholastic rubbish; the sewer tumbles upon this feeble spirit, which of itself was flowing clearly, but now, obstructed by tiles, bricks, plaster, ruins from all quarters of the globe, drags on darkened and slackened. Gower, one of the most learned of his time,[3] supposed that Latin was invented by the old prophetess Carmens; that the grammarians, Aristarchus, Donatus, and Didymus, regulated its syntax, pronunciation, and prosody; that it was adorned by Cicero with the flowers of eloquence and rhetoric; then enriched by translations from the Arabic, Chaldæan, and Greek; and that at last, after much labour of celebrated writers, it attained its final perfection in Ovid, the poet of love. Elsewhere he discovers that Ulysses learned rhetoric from Cicero, magic from Zoroaster, astronomy from Ptolemy, and philosophy from Plato. And what a style! so long, so dull,[4] so

[1] Contemporary with Chaucer. The *Confessio Amantis* dates from 1393.

[2] *History of Rosiphele. Ballads.*

[3] Warton, ii. 240.

[4] See, for instance, his description of the sun's crown, the most poetical passage in book vii

drawn out by repetitions, the most minute details, garnished with references to his text, like a man who, with his eyes glued to his Aristotle and his Ovid, a slave of his musty parchments, can do nothing but copy and string his rhymes together. Scholars even in old age, they seem to believe that every truth, all wit, is in their great wood-bound books; that they have no need to find out and invent for themselves; that their whole business is to repeat; that this is, in fact, man's business. The scholastic system had enthroned the dead letter, and peopled the world with dead understandings.

After Gower come Occleve and Lydgate.[1] 'My father Chaucer would willingly have taught me,' says Occleve, 'but I was dull, and learned little or nothing.' He paraphrased in verse a treatise of Egidius, on government; these are moralities. There are others, on compassion, after Augustine, and on the art of dying; then love-tales; a letter from Cupid, dated from his court in the month of May. Love and moralities,[2] that is, abstractions and refinements, were the taste of the time; and so, in the time of Lebrun, of Esménard, at the close of contemporaneous French literature,[3] they produced collections of didactic poems, and odes to Chloris. As for the monk Lydgate, he had some talent, some imagination, especially in high-toned descriptions: it was the last flicker of a dying literature; gold received a golden coating, precious stones were placed upon diamonds, ornaments multiplied and made fantastic; as in their dress and buildings, so in their style.[4] Look at the costumes of Henry IV. and Henry V., monstrous heart-shaped or horn-shaped head-dresses, long sleeves covered with ridiculous designs, the plumes, and again the oratories, armorial tombs, little gaudy chapels, like conspicuous flowers under the naves of the Gothic perpendicular. When we can no more speak to the soul, we try to speak to the eyes. This is what Lydgate does, nothing more. Pageants or shows are required of him, 'disguisings' for the Company of goldsmiths; a mask before the king, a May-entertainment for the sheriffs of London, a drama of the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, a masquerade, a Christmas show; he gives the plan and furnishes the verses. In this matter he never runs dry; two hundred and fifty-one poems are attributed to him. Poetry thus conceived becomes a manufacture; it is composed by the yard. Such was the judgment of the Abbot of St. Albans, who, having got him to translate a legend in verse, pays a hundred shillings for the whole, verse, writing, and illuminations, placing the three works on a level.

[1] 1420, 1430.

[2] This is the title Froissart (1397) gave to his collection when presenting it to Richard II.

[3] Lebrun, 1729–1807; Esménard, 1770–1812.

[4] Lydgate, *The Destruction of Troy*—description of Hector's chapel Especially read the *Pageants* or *Solemn Entries*.

In fact, no more thought was required for one than for the others. His three great works, *The Fall of Princes*, *The Destruction of Troy*, and *The Siege of Thebes*, are only translations or paraphrases, verbose, erudite, descriptive, a kind of chivalrous processions, coloured for the twentieth time, in the same manner, on the same vellum. The only point which rises above the average, at least in the first poem, is the idea of Fortune,[1] and the violent vicissitudes of human life. If there was a philosophy at this time, this was it. They willingly narrated horrible and tragic histories; gather them from antiquity down to their own day; they were far from the trusting and passionate piety which felt the hand of God in the government of the world; they saw that the world went blundering here and there like a drunken man. A sad and gloomy world, amused by external pleasures, oppressed with a dull misery, which suffered and feared without consolation or hope, isolated between the ancient spirit in which it had no living hope, and the modern spirit whose active science it ignored. Fortune, like a black smoke, hovers over all, and shuts out the sight of heaven. They picture it as follows:—

> 'Her face semyng cruel and terrible
> And by disdaynè menacing of loke, . . .
> An hundred handes she had, of eche part . . .
> Some of her handès lyft up men alofte,
> To hye estate of worldlye dignitè;
> Another handè griped ful unsofte,
> Which cast another in grete adversite.'[2]

They look upon the great unhappy ones, a captive king, a dethroned queen, assassinated princes, noble cities destroyed,[3] lamentable spectacles as exhibited in Germany and France, and of which there will be plenty in England; and they can only regard them with a harsh resignation. Lydgate ends by reciting a commonplace of mechanical piety, by way of consolation. The reader makes the sign of the cross, yawns, and goes away. In fact, poetry and religion are no longer capable of suggesting a genuine sentiment. Authors copy, and copy again. Hawes[4] copies the *House of Fame* of Chaucer, and a sort of allegorical amorous poem, after the *Roman de la Rose*. Barclay[5] translates the *Mirror of Good Manners* and the *Ship of Fools*. Continually we meet with dull abstractions, used up and barren; it is the scholastic phase of poetry. If anywhere there is an accent of

[1] See the Vision of Fortune, a gigantic figure. In this painting he shows both feeling and talent.

[2] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*. Warton, ii. 280.

[3] The War of the Hussites, The Hundred Years' War, and The War of the Roses.

[4] About 1506. *The Temple of Glass*. *Passetyme of Pleasure*.

[5] About 1500.

greater originality, it is in this *Ship of Fools*, and in Lydgate's *Dance of Death*, bitter buffooneries, sad gaieties, which, in the hands of artists and poets, were having their run throughout Europe. They mock at each other, grotesquely and gloomily; poor, dull, and vulgar figures, shut up in a ship, or made to dance on their tomb to the sound of a fiddle, played by a grinning skeleton. At the end of all this mouldy talk, and amid the disgust which they have conceived for each other, a clown, a tavern Triboulet,[1] composer of little jeering and macaronic verses, Skelton[2] makes his appearance, a virulent pamphleteer, who, jumbling together French, English, Latin phrases, with slang, and fashionable words, invented words, intermingled with short rhymes, fabricates a sort of literary mud, with which he bespatters Wolsey and the bishops. Style, metre, rhyme, language, art of every kind, is at an end; beneath the vain parade of official style there is only a heap of rubbish. Yet, as he says,

> 'Though my rhyme be ragged
> Tattered and gagged,
> Rudely rain beaten,
> Rusty, moth-eaten,
> Yf ye take welle therewitho,
> It hath in it some pithe.'

It is full of political animus, sensual liveliness, English and popular instincts; it lives. It is a coarse life, still elementary, swarming with ignoble vermin, like that which appears in a great decomposing body. It is life, nevertheless, with its two great features which it is destined to display: the hatred of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is the Reformation; the return to the senses and to natural life, which is the Renaissance.

[1] The court fool in Victor Hugo's drama of *Le Roi s'amuse*.—TR.

[2] Died 1529; Poet Laureate 1489. His *Bouge of Court*, his *Crown of Laurel*, his *Elegy on the Death of the Earl of Northumberland*, are well written and belong to official poetry.

BOOK II.

THE RENAISSANCE.

CHAPTER I.

The Pagan Renaissance.

1. Manners of the Time.

I. Idea which men had formed of the world, since the dissolution of the old society—How and why human inventiveness reappears—The form or the spirit of the Renaissance—The representation of objects is imitative, characteristic, and complete.

II. Why the ideal changes—Improvement of the state of man in Europe—In England — Peace — Industry — Commerce — Pasturage — Agriculture — Growth of public wealth — Buildings and furniture — The palace, meals and habits—Court pageantries—Celebrations under Elizabeth — Masques under James I.

III. Manners of the people—Pageants—Theatres—Village feasts—Pagan development.

IV. Models—The ancients—Translation and study of classical authors — Sympathy for the manners and mythology of the ancients—The moderns—Taste for Italian writings and ideas—Poetry and painting in Italy were pagan—The ideal is the strong and happy man, limited by the present world.

2. Poetry.

I. The English Renaissance is the Renaissance of the Saxon genius.

II. The forerunners—The Earl of Surrey—His feudal and chivalrous life—His English individual character—His serious and melancholy poems—His conception of intimate love.

III. His style—His masters, Petrarch and Virgil—His progress, power, precocious perfection—Birth of art—Weaknesses, imitation, research—Art incomplete.

IV. Growth and completion of art—*Euphues* and fashion—Style and spirit of the Renaissance—Copiousness and irregularity—How manners, style, and spirit correspond—Sir Philip Sydney—His education, life, character—His learning, gravity, generosity, forcible expression—The *Arcadia*—Exaggeration and mannerism of sentiments and style—*Defence of Poesie*—Eloquence and energy—His sonnets—Wherein the body and the passions of the

Renaissance differ from those of the moderns—Sensual love—Mystical love.

V. Pastoral poetry—The great number of poets—Spirit and force of the poetry—State of mind which produces it—Love of the country—Reappearance of the ancient gods—Enthusiasm for beauty—Picture of ingenuous and happy love—Shakspeare, Jonson, Fletcher, Drayton, Marlowe, Warner, Breton, Lodge, Greene—How the transformation of the people transforms art.

VI. Ideal poetry—Spenser—His life—His character—His platonism—His *Hymns of Love and Beauty*—Copiousness of his imagination—How far it was suited for the epic—Wherein it was allied to the '*faërie*'—His tentatives—*Shepherd's Calendar*—His short poems—His masterpiece—The *Faërie Queene*—His epic is allegorical and yet life-like—It embraces Christian chivalry and the Pagan Olympia—How it combines these.

VII. The *Faërie Queene*—Impossible events—How they appear natural—*Belphœbe* and *Chrysogone*—Fairy and gigantic pictures and landscapes—Why they must be so—The cave of Mammon, and the gardens of Acrasia—How Spenser composes—Wherein the art of the Renaissance is complete.

3. Prose.

I. Limit of the poetry—Changes in society and manners—How the return to nature becomes an appeal to the senses—Corresponding changes in poetry—How agreeableness replaces energy—How prettiness replaces the beautiful—Refinements—Carew, Suckling, Herrick—Affectation—Quarles, Herbert, Babington, Donne, Cowley—Beginning of the classic style, and the drawing-room life.

II. How poetry passed into prose—Connection of science and art—In Italy—In England—How the triumph of nature develops the exercise of the natural reason—Scholars, historians, speakers, compilers, politicians, antiquarians, philosophers, theologians—The abundance of talent, and the rarity of fine works—Superfluousness, punctiliousness, and pedantry of the style—Originality, precision, energy, and richness of the style—How, unlike the classical writers, they represent the individual, not the idea.

III. Robert Burton—His life and character—Vastness and confusion of his acquirements—His subject, the *Anatomy of Melancholy*—Scholastic divisions—Medley of moral and medical science.

IV. Sir Thomas Browne—His talent—His imagination is that of a North-man—*Hydriotaphia, Religio Medici*—His ideas, curiosity, and doubts belong to the age of the Renaissance—*Pseudodoxia*—Effects of this activity and this direction of the public mind.

V. Francis Bacon—His talent—His originality—Concentration and brightness of his style—Comparisons and aphorisms—The *Essays*—His style not argumentative, but intuitive—His practical good sense—Turning-point of his philosophy—The object of science is the amelioration of the condition of man—*New Atlantis*—The idea is in accordance with the state of affairs and the spirit of the times—It completes the Renaissance—It introduces a new method—The *Organum*—Where Bacon stopped—Limits of the spirit of the age—How the conception of the world, which had been poetic, became mechanical—How the Renaissance ended in the establishment of positive science.

1. Manners of the Time

I.

FOR seventeen centuries a deep and sad thought had weighed upon the spirit of man, first to overwhelm it, then to exalt and to weaken it, never loosing its hold throughout this long space of time. It was the idea of the impotence and decadence of man. Greek corruption, Roman oppression, and the dissolution of the old world, had given it birth; it, in its turn, had produced a stoical resignation, an epicurean indifference, Alexandrian mysticism, and the Christian hope in the kingdom of God. 'The world is evil and lost, let us escape by insensibility, amazement, ecstasy.' Thus spoke the philosophers; and religion, coming after, announced that the end was near: 'Prepare, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' For a thousand years universal ruin incessantly drove still deeper into their hearts this gloomy thought; and when man in the feudal state raised himself, by sheer force of courage and arms, from the depths of final imbecility and general misery, he discovered his thought and his work fettered by the crushing idea, which, forbidding a life of nature and worldly hopes, erected into ideals the obedience of the monk and the dreams of fanatics.

It degenerated of itself. For the natural result of such a conception, as of the miseries which engender it, and the discouragement which it gives rises to, is to paralyse personal action, and to replace originality by submission. From the fourth century, gradually the dead letter was substituted for the living faith. Christians resigned themselves into the hands of the clergy, they into the hands of the Pope. Christian opinions were subordinated to theologians, and theologians to the Fathers. Christian faith was reduced to the accomplishment of works, and works to the accomplishment of ceremonies. Religion flowing during the first centuries, had become hardened and crystallised, and the coarse contact of the barbarians placed on it, in addition, a layer of idolatry: theocracy and the Inquisition manifested themselves, the monopoly of the clergy and the prohibition of the Scriptures, the worship of relics and the purchase of indulgences. In place of Christianity, the church; in place of free belief, an imposed orthodoxy; in place of moral fervour, determined religious practices; in place of heart and energetic thought, external and mechanical discipline: these are the characteristics of the middle-age. Under this constraint a thinking society had ceased to think; philosophy was turned into a text-book, and poetry into raving; and mankind, slothful and crouching, made over their conscience and their conduct into the hands of their priests, and were as puppets, capable only of reciting a catechism and chanting a hymn.[1]

[1] See, at Bruges, the pictures of Hemling (fifteenth century). No painting enables us to understand so well the ecclesiastical piety of the middle age which was altogether like that of the Buddhists.

At last invention makes another start; and it makes it by the efforts of the lay society, which rejected theocracy, kept the State free, and which presently discovered, or re-discovered, one after another, the industries, sciences, and arts. All was renewed; America and the Indies were added to the map; the shape of the earth was ascertained, the system of the universe propounded, modern philology was inaugurated, the experimental sciences set on foot, art and literature shot forth like a harvest, religion was transformed: there was no province of human intelligence and action which was not refreshed and fertilised by this universal effort. It was so great, that it passed from the innovators to the laggards, and reformed Catholicism in the face of Protestantism which it formed. It seems as though men had suddenly opened their eyes, and seen. In fact, they attain a new and superior kind of intelligence. It is the proper feature of this age, that men no longer make themselves masters of objects by bits, or isolated, or through scholastic or mechanical classifications, but as a whole, in general and complete views, with the eager grasp of a sympathetic spirit, which, being placed before a vast object, penetrates it in all its parts, tries it in all its relations, appropriates and assimilates it, impresses upon himself its living and potent image, so life-like and so powerful, that he is fain to translate it into externals through a work of art or an action. An extraordinary warmth of soul, a superabundant and splendid imagination, reveries, visions, artists, believers, founders, creators,—that is what such a form of intellect produces; for to create we must have, as had Luther and Loyola, Michael Angelo and Shakspeare,[1] an idea, not abstract, partial, and dry, but well defined, finished, sensible,—a true creation, which acts inwardly, and struggles to appear to the light. This was Europe's grand age, and the most notable epoch of human growth. To this day we live from its sap, we only carry on its pressure and efforts.

II.

When human power is manifested so clearly and in such great works, it is no wonder if the ideal changes, and the old pagan idea recurs. It recurs, bringing with it the worship of beauty and vigour, first in Italy; for this, of all countries in Europe, is the most pagan, the nearest to the ancient civilisation; thence in France and Spain, in Flanders, even in Germany; and finally in England. How is it propagated? What revolution of manners reunited mankind at this time, in every country, under a sentiment which they had forgotten for fifteen hundred years? Merely that their condition had improved, and they felt it. The idea ever expresses the actual situation, and the creatures of the imagination, like the conceptions of the spirit, only manifest the state of society and the degree of its welfare; there is a

[1] Van Orley, Michel Coxie, Franz Floris, the de Vos' the Sadlers, Crispin de Pass, and the artists of Nuremberg.

fixed connection between what man admires and what he is. While misery overwhelms him, while the decadence is visible, and hope shut out, he is inclined to curse his life on earth, and seek consolation in another sphere. As soon as his sufferings are alleviated, his power made manifest, his perspective enlarged, he begins once more to love the present life, to be self-confident, to love and praise energy, genius, all the effective faculties which labour to procure him happiness. About the twentieth year of Elizabeth's reign, the nobles gave up shield and two-handed sword for the rapier;[1] a little, almost imperceptible fact, yet vast, for it is like the change which, sixty years ago, made us give up the sword at court, to leave us with our arms swinging about in our black coats. In fact, it was the close of feudal life, and the beginning of court-life, just as to-day court-life is at an end, and the democratic reign has begun. With the two-handed swords, heavy coats of mail, feudal dungeons, private warfare, permanent disorder, all the scourges of the middle-age retired, and were wiped out in the past. The English had finished with the Wars of the Roses. They no longer ran the risk of being pillaged to-morrow for being rich, and hung the next day for being a traitor; they have no further need to furbish up their armour, make alliances with powerful nations, lay in stores for the winter, gather together men-at-arms, scour the country, to plunder and hang others.[2] The monarchy, in England as throughout Europe, established peace in the community,[3] and with peace appeared the useful arts. Domestic comfort follows civil security; and man, better furnished in his home, better protected in his hamlet, takes pleasure in his life on earth, which he has changed, and means to change.

Toward the close of the fifteenth century[4] the impetus was given; commerce and the woollen trade made a sudden advance, and such an enormous one that corn-fields were changed into pasture-lands, 'whereby the inhabitants of the said town (Manchester) have gotten and come into riches and wealthy livings,'[5] so that in 1553, 40,000 pieces of cloth were exported in English ships. It was already the England which we see to-day, a land of meadows, green, intersected by hedgerows, crowded with cattle, abounding in ships, a manufacturing opulent land, with a people of beef-eating toilers, who enrich it while they

[1] The first carriage was in 1564. It caused much astonishment. Some said that it was 'a great sea-shell brought from China;' others, 'that it was a temple in which cannibals worshipped the devil.'

[2] For a picture of this state of things, see Fen's *Paston Letters*.

[3] Louis XI. in France, Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, Henry VII. in England. In Italy the feudal regime ended earlier, by the establishment of republics and principalities.

[4] 1488. Act of Parliament on Enclosures

[5] *A Compendious Examination*, 1581, by William Strafford. Act of Parliament, 1541.

enrich themselves. They improved agriculture to such an extent, that in half a century[1] the produce of an acre was doubled.[2] They grew so rich, that at the beginning of the reign of Charles I. the Commons represented three times the wealth of the Upper House. The ruin of Antwerp[3] by the Duke of Parma sent to England 'the third part of the merchants and manufacturers, who made silk, damask, stockings, taffetas, and serges.' The defeat of the Armada and the decadence of Spain opened the seas to their merchants.[4] The toiling hive, who would dare, attempt, explore, act in unison, and always with profit, was about to reap its advantages and set out on its voyages, buzzing over the universe.

At the base and on the summit of society, in all ranks of life, in all grades of human condition, this new welfare became visible. In 1534, considering that the streets of London were 'very noyous and foul, and in many places thereof very jeopardous to all people passing and repassing, as well on horseback as on foot,' Henry VIII. began the paving of the city.[5] New streets covered the open spaces where the young men used to run and fight. Every year the number of taverns, theatres, rooms for recreation, places devoted to bear-baiting, increased. Before the time of Elizabeth the country-houses of gentlemen were little more than straw-thatched cottages, plastered with the coarsest clay, lighted only by trellises. 'Howbeit,' says Harrison (1580), 'such as be latelie builded are commonlie either of bricke or hard stone, or both; their roomes large and comelie, and houses of office further distant from their lodgings.' The old wooden houses were covered with plaster, 'which, beside the delectable whitenesse of the stuffe itselfe, is laied on so even and smoothlie, as nothing in my judgment can be done with more exactnesse.'[6] This open admiration shows from what hovels they had escaped. Glass was at last employed for windows, and the bare walls were covered with tapestries, on which visitors might see, with delight and astonishment, plants, animals, figures. They began to use stoves, and experienced the unwonted pleasure of being warm. Harrison notes three important changes which had taken place in the farm-houses of his time:—

'One is, the multitude of chimnies lately erected, whereas in their yoong daies

[1] *Pict. History*, ii. 902.

[2] Between 1377 and 1583 the increase was two millions and a half.

[3] In 1585; Ludovic Guicciardini.

[4] Henry VIII. at the beginning of his reign had but one ship of war. Elizabeth sent out one hundred and fifty against the Armada. In 1553 was founded a company to trade with Russia. In 1578 Drake circumnavigated the globe. In 1600 the East India Company was founded.

[5] *Pict. Hist.* ii. 781.

[6] Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, 1817, i. v. 72 *et passim*.

there were not above two or three, if so manie, in most uplandishe townes of the realme. . . . The second is the great amendment of lodging, although not generall, for our fathers, (yea and we ourselves also) have lien full oft upon straw pallets, on rough mats covered onelie with a sheet, under coverlets made of dagswain, or hop-harlots, and a good round log under their heads, insteed of a bolster or pillow. If it were so that the good man of the house, had within seven yeares after his marriage purchased a matteres or flockebed, and thereto a sacke of chaffe to rest his head upon, he thought himselfe to be as well lodged as the lord of the towne. . . . Pillowes (said they) were thought meet onelie for women in childbed. . . . The third thing is the exchange of vessell, as of treene platters into pewter, and wodden spoones into silver or tin; for so common was all sorts of treene stuff in old time, that a man should hardlie find four peeces of pewter (of which one was peradventure a salt) in a good farmers house.'[1]

It is not possession, but acquisition, which gives men pleasure and sense of power; they observe sooner a small happiness, new to them, than a great happiness which is old. It is not when all is good, but when all is better, that they see the bright side of life, and are tempted to make a holiday of it. This is why at this period they did make a holiday of it, a splendid show, so like a picture that it fostered painting in Italy, so like a representation, that it produced the drama in England. Now that the battle-axe and sword of the civil wars had beaten down the independent nobility, and the abolition of the law of maintenance had destroyed the petty royalty of each great feudal baron, the lords quitted their sombre castles, battlemented fortresses, surrounded by stagnant water, pierced with narrow windows, a sort of stone breastplates of no use but to preserve the life of their masters. They flock into new palaces, with vaulted roofs and turrets, covered with fantastic and manifold ornaments, adorned with terraces and vast staircases, with gardens, fountains, statues, such as were the palaces of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, half Gothic and half Italian,[2] whose convenience, grandeur, and beauty announced already habits of society and the taste for pleasure. They came to court and abandoned their old manners; the four meals which scarcely sufficed their former voracity were reduced to two; gentlemen soon became refined, placing their glory in the elegance and singularity of their amusements and their clothes. They dressed magnificently in splendid materials, with the luxury of men who rustle silk and make gold sparkle for the first time: doublets of scarlet satin; cloaks of sable costing a thousand ducats; velvet shoes, embroidered with gold and silver, covered with rosettes and ribbons; boots with falling tops, from whence hung a cloud of lace, embroidered with figures of birds, animals, constellations, flowers in silver, gold, or precious stones; ornamented shirts costing ten pounds. 'It is a common thing to put a thousand goats and a hundred oxen on a coat, and to carry a

[1] Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, i. v. 102.

[2] This was called the Tudor style. Under James I., in the hands of Inigo Jones, it became entirely Italian, approaching the antique.

whole manor on one's back.'[1] The costumes of the time were like shrines. When Elizabeth died, they found three thousand dresses in her wardrobe. Need we speak of the monstrous ruffs of the ladies, their puffed out dresses, their stomachers stiff with diamonds? As a singular sign of the times, the men were more changeable and more bedecked than they. Harrison says:

'Such is our mutabilitie, that to daie there is none to the Spanish guise, to morrow the French toies are most fine and delectable, yer long no such apparell as that which is after the high Alman fashion, by and by the Turkish maner is generallie best liked of, otherwise the Morisco gowns, the Barbarian sleeves . . . and the short French breeches. . . . And as these fashions are diverse, so likewise it is a world to see the costlinesse and the curiositie; the excesse and the vanitie: the pompe and the braverie; the change and the varietie; and finallie, the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees.'[2]

Folly, it may have been, but poetry likewise. There was something more than puppyism in this masquerade of splendid costume. The overflow of inner sentiment found this issue, as also in drama and poetry. It was an artistic spirit which induced it. There was an incredible outgrowth of living forms from their brains. They acted like their engravers, who give us in their frontispieces a prodigality of fruits, flowers, active figures, animals, gods, and pour out and confuse the whole treasure of nature in every corner of their paper. They must enjoy the beautiful; they would be happy through their eyes; they perceive in consequence naturally the relief and energy of forms. From the accession of Henry VIII. to the death of James I. we find nothing but tournaments, processions, public entries, masquerades. First come the royal banquets, coronation displays, large and noisy pleasures of Henry VIII. Wolsey entertains him

'In so gorgeous a sort and costlie maner, that it was an heaven to behold. There wanted no dames or damosels meet or apt to danse with the maskers, or to garnish the place for the time: then was there all kind of musike and harmonie, with fine voices both of men and children. On a time the king came suddenlie thither in a maske with a dozen maskers all in garments like sheepheards, made of fine cloth of gold, and crimosin sattin paned, . . . having sixteene torch-bearers. . . . In came a new banket before the king wherein were served two hundred diverse dishes, of costlie devises and subtilities. Thus passed they foorth the night with banketting, dansing, and other triumphs, to the great comfort of the king, and pleasant regard of the nobilitie there assembled.'[3]

Count, if you can,[4] the mythological entertainments, the theatrical re-

[1] Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 12th ed. 1821. Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, ed. Turnbull, 1836.

[2] Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, ii. 6, 87.

[3] Holinshed (1586), 1808, 6 vols. iii. 763 *et passim*.

[4] Holinshed, iii., *Reign of Henry VIII. Elizabeth and James Progresses* by Nichols

ceptions, the open-air operas played before Elizabeth, James, and their great lords. At Kenilworth the pageants lasted ten days. There was everything learned recreations, novelties, popular plays, sanguinary spectacles, coarse farces, juggling and feats of skill, allegories, mythologies, chivalric exhibitions, rustic and national commemorations. At the same time, in this universal outburst and sudden expanse, men become interested in themselves, find their life desirable, worthy of being represented and put on the stage complete; they play with it, delight in looking upon it, love its heights and depths, and make of it a work of art. The queen is received by a sibyl, then by giants of the time of Arthur, then by the Lady of the Lake, Sylvanus, Pomona, Ceres, and Bacchus, every divinity in turn presents her with the first fruits of his empire. Next day, a savage, dressed in moss and ivy, discourses before her with Echo in her praise. Thirteen bears are set fighting against dogs. An Italian acrobat performs wonderful feats before the whole assembly. A rustic marriage takes place before the queen, then a sort of comic fight amongst the peasants of Coventry, who represent the defeat of the Danes. As she is returning from the chase, Triton, rising from the lake, prays her, in the name of Neptune, to deliver the enchanted lady, pursued by ruthless Sir Bruce. Presently the lady appears, surrounded by nymphs, followed close by Proteus, who is borne by an enormous dolphin. Concealed in the dolphin, a band of musicians with a chorus of ocean-deities, sing the praise of the powerful, beautiful, chaste queen of England. You perceive that comedy is not confined to the theatre; the great of the realm and the queen herself become actors. The cravings of the imagination are so keen, that the court becomes a stage. Under James I., every year, on Twelfth-day, the queen, the chief ladies and nobles, played a piece called a Masque, a sort of allegory combined with dances, heightened in effect by decorations and costumes of great splendour, of which the mythological paintings of Rubens can alone give an idea:—

'The attire of the lords was from the antique Greek statues. On their heads they wore Persic crowns, that were with scrolls of gold plate turned outward, and wreathed about with a carnation and silver net-lawn. Their bodies were of carnation cloth of silver; to express the naked, in manner of the Greek thorax, girt under the breasts with a broad belt of cloth of gold, fastened with jewels; the mantles were of coloured silks; the first, sky-colour; the second, pearl-colour; the third, flame-colour; the fourth, tawny. The ladies attire was of white cloth of silver, wrought with Juno's birds and fruits; a loose under garment, full gathered, of carnation, striped with silver, and parted with a golden zone; beneath that, another flowing garment, of watchet cloth of silver, laced with gold; their hair carelessly bound under the circle of a rare and rich coronet, adorned with all variety, and choice of jewels; from the top of which flowed a transparent veil, down to the ground. Their shoes were azure and gold, set with rubies and diamonds.'[1]

I abridge the description, which is like a fairy tale. Fancy that all

[1] Ben Jonson's works, ed. Gifford, 1816, 9 vols. *Masque of Hymen*, vol. vii. 76.

these costumes, this glitter of materials, this sparkling of diamonds, this splendour of nudities, was displayed daily at the marriage of the great, to the bold sounds of a pagan epithalamium. Think of the feasts which the Earl of Carlisle introduced, where was served first of all a table loaded with sumptuous viands, as high as a man could reach, in order to remove it presently, and replace it by another similar table. This prodigality of magnificence, these costly follies, this unbridling of the imagination, this intoxication of eye and ear, this comedy played by the lords of the realm, showed, like the pictures of Rubens, Jordaens, and their Flemish contemporaries, so open an appeal to the senses, so complete a return to nature, that our chilled and gloomy age is scarcely able to imagine it.[1]

III.

To vent the feelings, to satisfy the heart and eyes, to set free boldly on all the roads of existence the pack of appetites and instincts, this was the craving which the manners of the time betrayed. It was 'merry England,' as they called it then. It was not yet stern and constrained. It expanded widely, freely, and rejoiced to find itself so expanded. No longer at court only was the drama found, but in the village. Strolling companies betook themselves thither, and the country folk supplied any deficiencies, when necessary. Shakspeare saw, before he depicted them, stupid fellows, carpenters, joiners, bellow-menders, play Pyramus and Thisbe,[2] represent the lion roaring as gently as possible, and the wall, by stretching out their hands. Every holiday was a pageant, in which townspeople, workmen, and children bore their parts. They were actors by nature. When the soul is full and fresh, it does not express its ideas by reasonings; it plays and figures them; it mimics them; that is the true and original language, the children's tongue, the speech of artists, of invention, and of joy. It is in this manner they please themselves with songs and feasting, on all the symbolic holidays with which tradition has filled the year.[3] On the Sunday after Twelfth-night the labourers parade the streets, with their shirts over their coats, decked with ribbons, dragging a plough to the sound of music, and dancing a sword-dance; on another day they draw in a cart a figure made of ears of corn, with songs, flutes, and drums; on another, Father Christmas and his company; or else they enact the history of Robin Hood, the bold poacher, around the May-pole, or the legend of Saint George and the Dragon. We might occupy half a volume in describing all these holidays, such as Harvest Home, All Saints, Martinmas, Sheepshearing,

[1] Certain private letters also describe the court of Elizabeth as a place where there was little piety or practice of religion, and where all enormities reigned in the highest degree.

[2] *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

[3] Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times.* chap. v. and vi.

above all Christmas, which lasted twelve days, and sometimes six weeks. They eat and drink, junket, tumble about, kiss the girls, ring the bells, satiate themselves with noise: coarse drunken revels, in which man is an unbridled animal, and which are the incarnation of natural life. The Puritans made no mistake about that. Stubbes says:

'First, all the wilde heades of the parishe, conventying together, chuse them a ground capitaine of mischeef, whan they innoble with the title of my Lorde of Misserule, and hym they crown with great solemnitie, and adopt for their kyng. This kyng anoynted, chuseth for the twentie, fourtie, three score, or a hundred lustie guttes like to hymself to waite uppon his lordely maiestie. . . . Then have they their hobbie horses, dragons, and other antiques, together with their baudie pipers and thunderyng drommers, to strike up the devilles daunce withall; then marche these heathen companie towardes the churche and churche-yarde, their pipers pipyng, their drommers thonderyng, their stumppes dauncyng, their belles rynglyng, their handkerchefes swyngyng about their heades like madmen, their hobbie horses and other monsters skirmishyng amongest the throng; and in this sorte they goe to the churche (though the minister bee at praier or preachyng), dauncyng, and swingyng their handkercheefes over their heades, in the churche, like devilles incarnate, with such a confused noise, that no man can heare his owne voice. Then the foolishe people they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere, and mount upon formes and pewes, to see these goodly pageauntes, solemnized in this sort. Then after this, aboute the churche they goe againe and againe, and so forthe into the churche-yarde, where they have commonly their sommer haules, their bowers, arbours, and banquettyng houses set up, wherein they feaste, banquet, and daunce all that daie, and peradventure all that night too. And thus these terrestrial furies spend the Sabbaoth daie! . . . An other sorte of fantasticall fooles bringe to these helhoundes (the Lorde of Misrule and his complices) some bread, some good ale, some newe cheese, some olde cheese, some custardes, some cakes, some flaunes, some tartes, some creame, some meate, some one thing, some an other.'

He continues thus:

'Against Maie, every parishe, towne and village assemble themselves together, bothe men, women, and children, olde and yong, even all indifferently; they goe to the woodes where they spende all the night in pleasant pastymes, and in the mornyng they returne, bringing with them birch, bowes, and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall. But their cheefest iewell they bringe from thence is their Maie poole, whiche they bring home with great veneration, as thus: They have twenty or fourtie yoke of oxen, every ox havyng a swecte nosegaie of flowers tyed on the tippe of his hornes, and these oxen drawe home this Maie poole (this stinckyng idoll rather) . . . and thus beyng reared up, they strawe the grounde aboute, binde greene boughes about it, sett up sommer haules, bowers, and arbours hard by it; and then fall they to banquet and feast, to leape and daunce aboute it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idolles. . . . Of a hundred maides goyng to the woode over night, there have scarcely the third parte returned home againe undefiled.'[1]

'On Shrove Tuesday,' says another,[2] 'at the sound of a bell, the

[1] Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, p. 168 *et passim*.

[2] Hentzner's *Travels in England* (Bentley's translation). He thought that the figure carried about in the Harvest Home represented Ceres.

folk become insane, thousands at a time, and forget all decency and common sense. . . . It is to Satan and the devil that they pay homage and do sacrifice in these abominable pleasures.' It is in fact to nature, to the ancient Pan, to Freya, to Hertha, her sisters, to the old Teutonic deities who survived the middle-age. At this period, in the temporary decay of Christianity, and the sudden advance of corporal well-being, man adored himself, and there endured no life within him but that of paganism.

IV.

To sum up, observe the process of ideas at this time. A few sectarians, chiefly in the towns and of the people, clung gloomily to the Bible. But the court and the men of the world sought their teachers and their heroes from pagan Greece and Rome. About 1490[1] they began to read the classics; one after the other they translated them; it was soon the fashion to read them in the original. Elizabeth, Jane Grey, the Duchess of Norfolk, the Countess of Arundel, many other ladies, were conversant with Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero in the original, and appreciated them. Gradually, by an insensible change, men were raised to the level of the great and healthy minds who had freely handled ideas of all kinds fifteen centuries ago. They comprehended not only their language, but their thought; they did not repeat lessons from, but held conversations with them; they were their equals, and found in them intellects as manly as their own. For they were not scholastic cavillers, miserable compilers, repulsive pedants, like the professors of jargon whom the middle-age had set over them, like gloomy Duns Scotus, whose leaves Henry VIII.'s Visitors scattered to the winds. They were gentlemen, statesmen, the most polished and best educated men in the world, who knew how to speak, and drew their ideas not from books, but from things, living ideas, and which entered of themselves into living souls. Across the train of hooded schoolmen and sordid cavillers the two adult and thinking ages were united, and the moderns, silencing the infantine or snuffling voices of the middle-age, condescended only to converse with the noble ancients. They accepted their gods, at least they understand them, and keep them by their side. In poems, festivals, tapestries, almost all ceremonies, they appear, not restored by pedantry merely, but kept alive by sympathy, and glorified by the arts of an age as flourishing and almost as profound as that of their earliest birth. After the terrible night of the middle-age, and the dolorous legends of spirits and the damned, it was a delight to see again Olympus shining upon us from Greece; its heroic and beautiful deities once more ravishing the heart of men; they raised and in-

[1] Warton, vol. ii. sect. 35. Before 1600 all the great poets were translated into English, and between 1550 and 1616 all the great historians of Greece and Rome. Lyly in 1500 first taught Greek in public

structed this young world by speaking to it the language of passion and genius; and the age of strong deeds, free sensuality, bold invention, had only to follow its own bent, in order to discover in them the eternal promoters of liberty and beauty.

Nearer still was another paganism, that of Italy; the more seductive because more modern, and because it circulates fresh sap in an ancient stock the more attractive, because more sensuous and present, with its worship of force and genius, of pleasure and voluptuousness. The rigorists knew this well, and were shocked at it. Ascham writes:

'These bee the inchantementes of Circes, brought out of Italie to marre mens maners in England; much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fonde bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London. . . . There bee moe of these ungratious bookes set out in Printe wythin these fewe monethes, than have bene sene in England many score yeares before. . . . Than they have in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche: than the Genesis of Moses: They make more account of Tullies offices, than S. Paules epistles: of a tale in Bocace than a storie of the Bible.'[1]

In fact, at that time Italy clearly led in everything, and civilisation was to be drawn thence, as from its spring. What is this civilisation which is thus imposed on the whole of Europe, whence every science and every elegance comes, whose laws are obeyed in every court, in which Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, Shakspeare sought their models and their materials? It was pagan in its elements and its birth; in its language, which is but slightly different from Latin; in its Latin traditions and recollections, which no gap has come to interrupt; in its constitution, whose old municipal life first led and absorbed the feudal life; in the genius of its race, in which energy and enjoyment always abounded. More than a century before other nations, from the time of Petrarch, Rienzi, Boccacio, the Italians began to recover the lost antiquity, to deliver the manuscripts buried in the dungeons of France and Germany, to restore, interpret, comment upon, study the ancients, to make themselves Latin in heart and mind, to compose in prose and verse with the polish of Cicero and Virgil, to hold spirited converse and intellectual pleasures as the ornament and the fairest flower of life.[2] They adopt not merely the externals of the old existence, but the elements, that is, preoccupation with the present life, forgetfulness of the future, the appeal to the senses, the renunciation of Christianity. 'We must enjoy,' sang their first poet, Lorenzo de Medici, in his pastorals and triumphal songs: 'there is no certainty of to-morrow.' In Pulci the mocking incredulity breaks out, the bold and sensual gaiety, all the audacity of the free-thinkers, who kicked aside in disgust the worn-out

[1] Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570), ed. Arber, 1870, first book, 78 *et passim*.

[2] Ma il vero e principal ornemento dell' animo in ciascuno penso io che siano le lettere, benchè i Franchesi solamente conoscano la nobilità dell'arme . . . et tutti i litterati tengon per vilissimi huomini. Castiglione, *il Cortigiano*, e. 1583 p. 112.

monkish frock of the middle-age. It was he who, in a jesting poem, puts at the beginning of each canto a Hosanna, an In principio, or a sacred text from the mass-book.[1] When he had been inquiring what the soul was, and how it entered the body, he compared it to jam covered up in white bread quite hot. What would become of it in the other world? 'Some people think they will there discover fig-peckers, plucked ortolans, excellent wine, good beds, and therefore they follow the monks, walking behind them. As for us, dear friend, we shall go into the black valley, where we shall hear no more Alleluias.' If you wish for a more serious thinker, listen to the great patriot, the Thucydides of the age, Machiavelli, who, contrasting Christianity and paganism, says that the first places 'supreme happiness in humility, abnegation, contempt for human things, while the other makes the sovereign good consist in greatness of soul, force of body, and all the qualities which make men to be feared.' Whereon he boldly concludes that Christianity teaches man 'to support evils, and not to do great deeds;' he discovers in that inner weakness the cause of all oppressions; declares that 'the wicked saw that they could tyrannise without fear over men, who, in order to get to paradise, were more disposed to suffer than to avenge injuries.' From this time, and in spite of his constrained genuflexions, you can see which religion he prefers. The ideal to which all efforts were turning, on which all thoughts depended, and which completely raised this civilisation, was the strong and happy man, fortified by all powers to accomplish his wishes, and disposed to use them in pursuit of his happiness.

If you would see this idea in its grandest operation, you must seek it in the arts, such as Italy made them and carried throughout Europe, raising or transforming the national schools with such originality and vigour, that all art likely to survive is derived from hence, and the population of living figures with which they have covered our walls, denotes, like Gothic architecture or French tragedy, a unique epoch of the human intelligence. The attenuated mediæval Christ—a miserable, distorted, and bleeding earth-worm; the pale and ugly Virgin—a poor old peasant woman, fainting beside the gibbet of her Son; ghastly martyrs, dried up with fasts, with entranced eyes; knotty-fingered saints with sunken chests,—all the touching or lamentable visions of the middle-age have vanished: the train of godheads which are now developed show nothing but flourishing frames, noble, regular features, and fine easy gestures; the names, the names only, are Christian. The new Jesus is a 'crucified Jupiter, as Pulci called him; the Virgins which Raphael designed naked, before covering them with garments,[2] are

[1] See Burchard, the Pope's Steward, account of the festival at which Lucretia Borgia assisted. Letters of Aretinus, *Life of Cellini*, etc.

[2] See his sketches at Oxford, and the sketches of Fra Bartolomeo at Florence. See also the Martyrdom of S. Laurence, by Baccio Bandinelli.

beautiful girls, quite earthly, relatives of the Fornarina. The saints which Michael Angelo arranges and contorts in heaven on the judgment-day are an assembly of athletes, capable of fighting well and daring much. A martyrdom, like that of Saint Laurentius, is a fine ceremony in which a beautiful young man, without clothing, lies amidst fifty men dressed and grouped as in an ancient gymnasium. Is there one of them who had macerated himself? Is there one who had thought with anguish and tears of the judgment of God, who had worn down and subdued his flesh, who had filled his heart with the sadness and sweetness of the gospel? They are too vigorous for that, they are in too robust health; their clothes fit them too closely; they are too ready for prompt and energetic action. We might make of them strong soldiers or proud courtesans, admirable in a pageant or at a ball. So, all that the spectator accords to their halo of glory, is a bow or a sign of the cross; after which his eyes find pleasure in them; they are there simply for the enjoyment of the eyes. What the spectator feels at the sight of a Florentine Madonna, is the splendid Virgin, whose powerful body and fine growth bespeak her race and her vigour; the artist did not paint moral expression as nowadays, the depth of a soul tortured and refined by three centuries of culture. They confine themselves to the body, to the extent even of speaking enthusiastically of the spinal column itself, 'which is magnificent;' of the shoulder-blades, which in the movements of the arm 'produce an admirable effect.' 'You will next design the bone which is situated between the hips. It is very fine, and is called the sacrum.'[1] The important point with them is to represent the nude well. Beauty with them is that of the complete skeleton, sinews which are linked together and tightened, the thighs which support the trunk, the strong chest breathing freely, the pliant neck. What a pleasure to be naked! How good it is in the full light to rejoice in your strong body, your well-formed muscles, your gay and bold soul! The splendid goddesses reappear in their primitive nudity, not dreaming that they are nude; you see from the tranquillity of their look, the simplicity of their expression, that they have always been thus, and that shame has not yet reached them. The soul's life is not here contrasted, as amongst us, with the body's life; the one is not so lowered and degraded, that we dare not show its actions and functions; they do not hide them; man does not dream of being all spirit. They rise, as of old, from the luminous sea, with their rearing steeds tossing up their manes, grinding the bit, inhaling the briny savour, whilst their companions wind the sounding-shell; and the spectators,[2] accustomed to handle the sword, to combat

[1] Benvenuto Cellini, *Principles of the Art of Design.*

Life of Cellini. Compare also these exercises which Castiglione prescribes for a well-educated man, in his *Cortegiano*, ed. 1585, p. 55:—'Peró voglio che il nostro cortegiano sia perfetto cavaliere d'ogni sella. . . . Et perchè degli Italiani è peculiar laude il cavalcare benè alla brida, il maneggiar con raggione massima-

naked with the dagger or double-handled blade, to ride on perilous roads, sympathise with the proud shape of the bended back, the effort of the arm about to strike, the long quiver of the muscles which, from neck to heel, swell out, to brace a man, or to throw him.

2. Poetry.

I.

Transplanted into different races and climates, this paganism receives from each, distinct features and a distinct character. In England it becomes English; the English Renaissance is the Renaissance of the Saxon genius. Invention recommences; and to invent is to express one's genius. A Latin race can only invent by expressing Latin ideas; a Saxon race by expressing Saxon ideas; and we shall find in the new civilisation and poetry, descendants of Cædmon and Adhelm, of Piers Plowman, and Robin Hood.

II.

Old Puttenham says:

'In the latter end of the same king (Henry the eight) reigne, sprong up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyat th' elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Arioste, and Petrarch, they greatly pollished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile.'[1]

Not that their style was very original, or openly exhibits the new spirit: the middle-age is nearly ended, but it was not yet finished. By their side Andrew Borde, John Bale, John Heywood, Skelton himself, repeat the platitudes of the old poetry and the coarseness of the old style. Their manners, half refined, were still half feudal; on the field, before Landrecies, the English commander wrote a letter to the French governor of Térouanne, to ask him 'if he had not some gentlemen disposed to break a lance in honour of the ladies,' and promised to send six champions to meet them. Parades, combats, wounds, challenges, love, appeals to the judgment of God, penances,—all these were found in the life of Surrey as in a chivalric romance. A great lord, an earl, a relative of the king, who had figured in processions and ceremonies, had made war, commanded fortresses, ravaged countries, mounted to the assault, fallen

mente cavalli aspri, il corre lance, il giostare, sia in questo de meglior Italiani. . . . Nel torneare, tener un passo, combattere una sbarra, sia buono tra il miglior francesi. . . . Nel giocare a canne, correr torri, lanciar haste e dardi, sia tra Spagnuoli eccellente. . . . Conveniente è ancor sapere saltare, e correre; . . . ancor nobile exercitio il gisco di palla. . . . Non di minor laude estimo il voltegiar a cavallo.'

[1] Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Arber, 1869, bk. i. ch. 31. p. 74

in the breach, had been saved by his servant, magnificent, sumptuous, irritable, ambitious, four times imprisoned, finally beheaded. At the coronation of Ann of Cleves he was one of the challengers of the tourney. Denounced and placed in durance, he offered to fight unarmed against an armed adversary. Another time he was put in prison for having eaten flesh in Lent. No wonder if this prolongation of chivalric manners brought with it a prolongation of chivalric poetry; if in an age which had known Petrarch, poets displayed the sentiments of Petrarch. Lord Berners, Lord Sheffield, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Surrey in the first rank, were, like Petrarch, plaintive and platonic lovers. It was pure love to which Surrey gave expression; for his lady, the beautiful Geraldine, like Beatrice and Laura, was an ideal personage, and a child of thirteen years.

And yet, amid this languor of mystical tradition, a personal feeling had sway. In this spirit which imitated, and that badly at times, which still groped for an outlet, and now and then admitted into its polished stanzas the old, simple expressions and stale metaphors of heralds of arms and trouvères, there was already visible the Northern melancholy, the inner and gloomy emotion. This feature, which presently, at the finest moment of its richest blossom, in the splendid expansiveness of natural life, spreads a sombre tint over the poetry of Sidney, Spenser, Shakspeare, already in the first poet separates this pagan yet Teutonic world from the other, all in all voluptuous, which in Italy, with lively and refined irony, had no taste, except for art and pleasure. Surrey translated the Ecclesiastes into verse. Is it not singular, at this early hour, in this rising dawn, to find such a book in his hand? A disenchantment, a sad or bitter dreaminess, an innate consciousness of the vanity of human things, are never lacking in this country and in this race; the inhabitants support life with difficulty, and know how to speak of death. Surrey's finest verses bear witness thus soon to his serious bent, this instinctive and grave philosophy. He records his griefs, regretting his beloved Wyatt, his friend Clère, his companion the young Duke of Richmond, all dead in their prime. Alone, a prisoner at Windsor, he recalls the happy days they have passed together:

'So cruel prison how could betide, alas,
As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy,
With a Kinges son, my childish years did pass,
In greater feast than Priam's son of Troy.

Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour,
The large green courts, where we were wont to hove,
With eyes cast up into the Maiden's tower,
And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love.

The stately seats, the ladies bright of hue,
The dances short, long tales of great delight,
With words and looks, that tigers could but rue;
Where each of us did plead the other's right.

The palm-play, where, despoiled for the game,
With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love
Have miss'd the ball, and got sight of our dame,
To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above. . . .

The secret thoughts, imparted with such trust;
The wanton talk, the divers change of play;
The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,
Wherewith we past the winter night away.

And with his thought the blood forsakes the face;
The tears berain my cheeks of deadly hue:
The which, as soon as sobbing sighs, alas!
Up-supped have, thus I my plaint renew:

O place of bliss! renewer of my woes!
Give me account, where is my noble fere?
Whom in thy walls thou dost each night enclose;
To other lief; but unto me most dear.

Echo, alas! that doth my sorrow rue,
Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint.'[1]

So in love, it is the sinking of a weary soul, to which he gives vent:

'For all things having life, sometime hath quiet rest;
The bearing ass, the drawing ox, and every other beast;
The peasant, and the post, that serves at all assays;
The ship-boy, and the galley-slave, have time to take their ease;
Save I, alas! whom care of force doth so constrain,
To wail the day, and wake the night, continually in pain,
From pensiveness to plaint, from plaint to bitter tears,
From tears to painful plaint again; and thus my life it wears.'[2]

That which brings joy to others brings him grief:

'The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;
The hart has hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he slings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs!'[3]

[1] Surrey's *Poems*, Pickering, 1831, p. 17.

[2] *Ibid.* 'The faithful lover declareth his pains and uncertain joys, and with only hope recomforteth his woful heart,' p. 53.

[3] *Ibid.* 'Description of Spring, wherein every thing renews, save only the lover,' p. 3.

For all that, he will love on to his last sigh.

'Yea, rather die a thousand times, than once to false my faith;
And if my feeble corpse, through weight of woful smart
Do fail, or faint, my will it is that still she keep my heart.
And when this carcass here to earth shall be refar'd,
I do bequeath my wearied ghost to serve her afterward.'[1]

An infinite love, and pure as Petrarch's; and she is worthy of it. In the midst of all these studied or imitated verses, an admirable portrait remains distinct, the simplest and truest we can imagine, a work of the heart now, and not of the memory, which behind the dame of chivalry shows the English wife, and behind the feudal gallantry domestic bliss. Surrey alone, restless, hears within him the firm tones of a good friend, a sincere counsellor, Hope, who speaks to him thus

'For I assure thee, even by oath,
And thereon take my hand and troth,
That she is one the worthiest,
The truest, and the faithfullest;
The gentlest and the meekest of mind
That here on earth a man may find:
And if that love and truth were gone,
In her it might be found alone.
For in her mind no thought there is,
But how she may be true, I wis;
And tenders thee and all thy heal,
And wishes both thy health and weal;
And loves thee even as far forth than
As any woman may a man;
And is thine own, and so she says;
And cares for thee ten thousand ways.
Of thee she speaks, on thee she thinks;
With thee she eats, with thee she drinks,
With thee she talks, with thee she moans;
With thee she sighs, with thee she groans;
With thee she says "Farewell mine own!"
When thou, God knows, full far art gone.
And even, to tell thee all aright,
To thee she says full oft "Good night!"
And names thee oft her own most dear,
Her comfort, weal, and all her cheer;
And tells her pillow all the tale
How thou hast done her woe and bale;
And how she longs, and plains for thee,
And says, "Why art thou so from me?"
Am I not she that loves thee best?
Do I not wish thine ease and rest?
Seek I not how I may thee please?
Why art thou so from thine ease?

[1] Surrey's *Poems*, p. 56.

If I be she for whom thou carest,
For whom in torments so thou farest,
Alas! thou knowest to find me here,
Where I remain thine own most dear,
Thine own most true, thine own most just,
Thine own that loves thee still, and must;
Thine own that cares alone for thee,
As thou, I think, dost care for me;
And even the woman, she alone,
That is full bent to be thine own.'[1]

Certainly it is of his wife[2] that he is thinking here, not of any imaginary Laura. The poetic dream of Petrarch has become the exact picture of deep and perfect conjugal affection, such as yet survives in England; such as all the poets, from the authoress of the *Nut-brown Maid* to Dickens,[3] have never failed to represent.

III.

An English Petrarch: no juster title could be given to Surrey, for it expresses his talent as well as his disposition. In fact, like Petrarch, the oldest of the humanists, and the earliest exact writer of the modern tongue, Surrey introduces a new style, a manly style, which marks a great transformation of the mind; for this new form of writing is the result of a superior reflection, which, governing the primitive impulse, calculates and selects with an end in view. At last the intellect has grown capable of self-criticism, and actually criticises itself. It corrects its unconsidered works, infantine and incoherent, at once incomplete and superabundant; it strengthens and binds them together; it prunes and perfects them; it takes from them the master idea, to set it free and in the light of day. This is what Surrey does, and his education had prepared him for it; for he had studied Virgil as well as Petrarch, and translated two books of the *Æneid*, almost verse for verse. In such company one cannot but select one's ideas and arrange one's phrases. After their example, he gauges the means of striking the attention, assisting the intelligence, avoiding fatigue and weariness. He looks forward to the last line whilst writing the first. He keeps the strongest word for the last, and shows the symmetry of ideas by the symmetry of phrases. Sometimes he guides the intelligence by a continuous series of contrasts to the final image; a kind of sparkling casket, in which he means to deposit the idea which he

[1] *Ibid.* 'A description of the restless state of the lover when absent from the mistress of his heart,' p. 78.

[2] In another piece, *Complaint on the Absence of her Lover being upon the Sea*, he speaks in exact terms of his wife, almost as affectionately.

[3] Greene, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Shakspeare, Ford, Otway Richardson, De Foe, Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, etc.

carries, and to which he directs our attention from the first.[1] Sometimes he leads his reader to the close of a long flowery description, and then suddenly checks him with a sorrowful phrase.[2] He arranges his process, and knows how to produce effects; he uses classical expressions, in which two substantives, each supported by its adjective, are balanced on either side of the verb.[3] He collects his phrases in harmonious periods, and does not neglect the delight of the ears any more than of the mind. By his inversions he adds force to his ideas, and weight to his argument. He selects elegant or noble terms, rejects idle words and redundant phrases. Every epithet contains an idea, every metaphor a sentiment. There is eloquence in the regular development of his thought; music in the sustained accent of his verse.

Such is the new-born art. Those who have ideas, now possess an instrument capable of expressing them. Like the Italian painters, who in fifty years had introduced or discovered all the technical tricks of the pencil, English writers, in half a century, introduce or discover all the artifices of language, period, style, heroic verse, stanza, so effectually, that a little later the most perfect versifiers, Dryden, and Pope himself, says Dr. Nott, will add scarce anything to the rules, invented or applied, which were employed in the earliest efforts.[4] Even Surrey is too near to these authors, too constrained in his models, not sufficiently free: he has not yet felt the great current of the age; we do not find in him a bold genius, an impassioned writer capable of wide expansion, but a courtier, a lover of elegance, who, penetrated by the beauties of two complete literatures, imitates Horace and the chosen masters of Italy, corrects and polishes little morsels, aims at speaking perfectly a fine language. Amongst semi-barbarians he wears a dress-coat becomingly. Yet he does not wear it completely at his ease: he keeps his eyes too exclusively on his models, and does not venture to permit himself frank and free gestures. He is still a scholar, makes too great use of hot and cold, wounds and martyrdom. Although a lover, and a genuine one, he thinks too much that he must be so in Petrarch's manner, that his phrase must be balanced and his image kept up. I had almost said that, in his sonnets of disappointed love, he thinks less often of the strength of love than of the beauty of his writing. He has conceits, ill-chosen words; he uses trite expressions; he relates how Nature, having formed his lady, broke the mould; he assigns parts to Cupid and Venus; he employs the old machinery of the troubadours and the ancients, like a clever man who wishes to pass for a gallant. Scarce any mind dares be at first quite itself: when a new art arises, the first artist listens not to his heart, but

[1] *The Frailty and Hurtfulness of Beauty.*

[2] *Description of Spring. A Vow to love faithfully*

[3] *Complaint of the Lover disdained.*

[4] Surrey, ed. Nott.

to his masters, and asks himself at every step whether he be setting foot on solid ground, or whether he is not stumbling.

IV.

Insensibly the growth becomes complete, and at the end of the century all was changed. A new, strange, overloaded style had been formed, destined to remain in force until the Restoration, not only in poetry, but also in prose, even in ceremonial speech and theological discourse,[1] so suitable to the spirit of the age, that we meet with it throughout Europe, in Ronsard and d'Aubigné, in Calderon, Gongora, and Marini. In 1580 appeared *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, by Lyly, which was its text-book, its masterpiece, its caricature, and was received with universal admiration.[2] 'Our nation,' says Edward Blount, 'are in his debt for a new English which hee taught them. All our ladies were then his scollers; and that beautie in court who could not parley Euphuesme was as little regarded as shee which now there speakes not French.' The ladies knew the phrases of *Euphues* by heart: strange, studied, and refined phrases, enigmatical; whose author seems of set purpose to seek the least natural expressions and the most far-fetched, full of exaggeration and antithesis, in which mythological allusions, illustrations from alchemy, botanical and astronomical figures, all the rubbish and medley of learning, travels, mannerism, roll in a flood of conceits and comparisons. Do not judge it by the grotesque picture that Walter Scott drew of it. Sir Piercie Shafton is but a pedant, a cold and dull copyist; it is its warmth and originality which give this style a true force and an accent of its own. You must conceive it, not as dead and inert, such as we have it to-day in old books, but springing from the lips of ladies and young lords in pearl-bedecked doublet, quickened by their vibrating voices, their laughter, the flash of their eyes, the motion of their hands as they played with the hilt of their swords or with their satin cloaks. They were witty, their heads full to overflowing; and they amused themselves, as our sensitive and eager artists do, at their ease in the studio. They did not speak to convince or be understood, but to satisfy their excited imagination, to expend their overflowing wit.[3] They played with words, twisted, put them out of shape, rejoiced in sudden views, strong contrasts, which they produced one after another, ever and anon, in quick succession. They cast flower on flower, tinsel on tinsel; everything sparkling delighted them; they gilded and embroidered and plumed their language like their garments. They cared nothing for clearness, order, common sense; it was a festival and a

[1] The Speaker's address to Charles II. on his restoration. Compare it with the speech of M. de Fontanes under the Empire. In each case it was the close of a literary epoch. Read for illustration the speech before the University of Oxford, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, i. 193.

[2] His second work, *Euphues and his England*, appeared in 1581.

[3] See Shakspeare's young men, Mercutio especially.

folly; absurdity pleased them. They knew nothing more tempting than a carnival of splendours and oddities; all was huddled together: a coarse gaiety, a tender and sad word, a pastoral, a sounding flourish of unmeasured boasting, a gambol of a Jack-pudding. Eyes, ears, all the senses, curious and excited, are satisfied by the jingle of syllables, the display of fine high-coloured words, the unexpected concurrence of droll or familiar images, the majestic roll of balanced periods. Every one had his oaths, his elegances, his style. 'One would say,' remarks Heylyn, 'that they are ashamed of their mother-tongue, and do not find it sufficiently varied to express the whims of their mind.' We no longer imagine this inventiveness, this boldness of fancy, this ceaseless fertility of a nervous sensibility: there was no genuine prose; the poetic flood swallowed it up. A word was not an exact symbol, as with us; a document which from cabinet to cabinet carried a precise thought. It was part of a complete action, a little drama; when they read it, they did not take it by itself, but imagined it with the intonation of a hissing and shrill voice, with the puckering of the lips, the knitting of the brows, and the succession of pictures which crowd behind it, and which it calls forth in a flash of lightning. Each one mimics and pronounces it in his own style, and impresses his own soul upon it. It was a song, which, like the poet's verse, contains a thousand things besides the literal sense, and manifests the depth, warmth, and sparkling of the source whence it came. For in that time, even when the man was feeble, his work lived: there is some pulse in the least productions of this age; force and creative fire signalise it; they penetrate through bombast and affectation. Lyly himself, so fantastic that he seems to write purposely in defiance of common sense, is at times a genuine poet, a singer, a man capable of rapture, akin to Spenser and Shakspeare; one of those introspective dreamers, who see dancing fairies, the purpled cheeks of goddesses, drunken, amorous woods, as he says:

> 'Adorned with the presence of my love,
> The woods I fear such secret power shall prove,
> As they'll shut up each path, hide every way,
> Because they still would have her go astray.'[1]

The reader must assist me, and assist himself. I cannot otherwise give him to understand what the men of this age had the felicity to experience.

Luxuriance and irregularity were the two features of this spirit and this literature,—features common to all the literatures of the Renaissance, but more marked here than elsewhere, because the German race is not confined, like the Latin, by the taste for harmonious forms, and prefers strong impression to fine expression. We must select amidst this crowd of poets; and here is one amongst the first, who will exhibit, by his writings as well as by his life, the greatness and the

[1] *The Maid her Metamorphosis.*

folly of the prevailing manners and the public taste: Sir Philip Sidney, nephew of the Earl of Leicester, a great lord and a man of action, accomplished in every kind of culture; who, after a good training in polite literature, travelled in France, Germany, and Italy; read Plato and Aristotle, studied astronomy and geometry at Venice; pondered over the Greek tragedies, the Italian sonnets, the pastorals of Montemayor, the poems of Ronsard; displaying an interest in science, keeping up an exchange of letters with the learned Hubert Languet; and withal a man of the world, a favourite of Elizabeth, having had enacted in her honour a flattering and comic pastoral; a genuine 'jewel of the Court;' a judge, like d'Urfé, of lofty gallantry and fine language; above all, chivalrous in heart and deed, who had desired to follow maritime adventure with Drake, and, to crown all, fated to die an early and heroic death. He was a cavalry officer, and had saved the English army at Gravelines. Shortly after, mortally wounded, and dying of thirst, as some water was brought to him, he saw by his side a soldier still more desperately hurt, who was looking at the water with anguish in his face: 'Give it to this man,' said he; 'his necessity is yet greater than mine.' Do not forget the vehemence and impetuosity of the middle-age;—one hand ready for action, and kept incessantly on the hilt of the sword or poniard. 'Mr. Molineux,' wrote he to his father's secretary, 'if ever I know you to do as much as read any letter I write to my father, without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak in earnest.' It was the same man who said to his uncle's adversaries that they 'lied in their throat;' and to support his words, promised them a meeting in three months in any place in Europe. The savage energy of the preceding age remains intact, and it is for this reason that poetry took so firm a hold on these virgin souls. The human harvest is never so fine as when cultivation opens up a new soil. Impassioned to an extreme, melancholy and solitary, he naturally turned to noble and ardent fantasy; and he was so much the poet, as to be so beyond his verses.

Shall I describe his pastoral epic, the *Arcadia*? It is but a recreation, a sort of poetical romance, written in the country for the amusement of his sister; a work of fashion, which, like *Cyrus* and *Clélie*,[1] is not a monument, but a relic. This kind of books shows only the externals, the current elegance and politeness, the jargon of the world of culture,—in short, that which should be spoken before ladies; and yet we perceive from it the bent of the general spirit. In *Clélie*, oratorical development, fine and collected analysis, the flowing converse of men seated quietly on elegant arm-chairs; in the *Arcadia*, fantastic imagination, excessive sentiments, a medley of events which suited men scarcely recovered from barbarism. Indeed, in London they still

[1] Two French novels of the age of Louis XIV each in ten volumes, and written by Mademoiselle de Scudéry.—TR.

used to fire pistols at each other in the streets; and under Henry VIII. and his children, queens, a Protector, the highest nobles, knelt under the axe of the executioner. Armed and perilous existence long resisted in Europe the establishment of peaceful and quiet life. It was necessary to change society and the soil, in order to transform men of the sword into citizens. The high roads of Louis XIV. and his regular administration, and more recently the railroads and the *sergents de ville*, came to relieve the French from habits of violence and a taste for dangerous adventure. Remember that at this period men's heads were full of tragical images. Sidney's *Arcadia* contains enough of them to supply half-a-dozen epics. 'It is a trifle,' says the author; 'my young head must be delivered.' In the first twenty-five pages you meet with a shipwreck, an account of pirates, a half-drowned prince rescued by shepherds, a voyage in Arcadia, various disguises, the retreat of a king withdrawn into solitude with his wife and children, the deliverance of a young imprisoned lord, a war against the Helots, the conclusion of peace, and many other things. Go on, and you will find princesses shut up by a wicked fairy, who beats them, and threatens them with death if they refuse to marry her son; a beautiful queen condemned to perish by fire if certain knights do not come to her succour; a treacherous prince tortured for his crimes, then cast from the top of a pyramid; fights, surprises, abductions, travels: in short, the whole programme of the most romantic tales. That is the serious element: the agreeable is of a like nature; the fantastic predominates. Improbable pastoral serves, as in Shakspeare or Lope de Vega, for an intermezzo to improbable tragedy. You are always coming upon dancing shepherds. They are very courteous, good poets, and subtle metaphysicians. There are many disguised princes who pay their court to the princesses. They sing continually, and get up allegorical dances; two bands approach, servants of Reason and Passion; their hats, ribbons, and dress are described in full. They quarrel in verse, and their hurried retorts, which follow close on one another, over-refined, keep up a tournament of wit. Who cared for what was natural or possible in this age? There were such festivals at Elizabeth's entries; and you have only to look at the engravings of Sadler, Martin de Vos, and Goltzius, to find this mixture of sensuous beauties and philosophical enigmas. The Countess of Pembroke and her ladies were delighted to picture this profusion of costumes and verses, this play beneath the trees. They had eyes in the sixteenth century, senses which sought satisfaction in poetry—the same satisfaction as in masquerading and painting. Man was not yet a pure reasoner; abstract truth was not enough for him. Rich stuffs, twisted about and folded; the sun to shine upon them, a large meadow full of white daisies; ladies in brocaded dresses, with bare arms, crowns on their heads, instruments of music behind the trees,—this is what the reader expects; he cares nothing for contrasts; he will readily provide a drawing-room in the midst of the fields.

What are they going to say there? Here comes out that restless exaltation, amidst all its folly, which is characteristic of the spirit of the age; love rises to the thirty-sixth heaven. Musidorus is the brother of Céladon; Pamela is closely related to the severe heroines of *Astrée*;[1] all the Spanish exaggerations abound with all their faults. But in works of fashion or of the Court, primitive sentiment never retains its sincerity: wit, the necessity to please, the desire of effect, of speaking better than others, alter it, force it, confuse the embellishments and refinements, so that nothing is left but twaddle. Musidorus wished to give Pamela a kiss. She repels him. He would have died on the spot; but luckily remembers that his mistress commanded him to leave her, and finds himself still able to obey her command. He complains to the trees, weeps in verse: there are dialogues where Echo, repeating the last word, replies; double rhymes, balanced stanzas, in which the theory of love is minutely detailed; in short, all choice morsels of ornamental poetry. If they send a letter to their mistress, they speak to it, tell the ink:

'Therefore mourne boldly, my inke; for while shee lookes upon you, your blacknesse will shine: cry out boldly my lamentation; for while shee reades you, your cries will be musicke.'[2]

Again, two young princesses are going to bed:

'They impoverished their clothes to enrich their bed, which for that night might well scorne the shrine of Venus; and there cherishing one another with deare, though chaste embracements; with sweete, though cold kisses; it might seeme that love was come to play him there without dart, or that wearie of his owne fires, he was there to refresh himselfe between their sweete breathing lippes.'[3]

In excuse of these follies, remember that they have their parallels in Shakspeare. Try rather to comprehend them, to imagine them in their place, with their surroundings, such as they are; that is, as the excess of singularity and inventive fire. Even though they mar now and then the finest ideas, yet a natural freshness pierces through the disguise. Take another example:

'In the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floore against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty varietie recount their wronge-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep.'

In Sidney's second work, *The Defence of Poesie*, we meet with genuine imagination, a sincere and serious tone, a grand, commanding style, all the passion and elevation which he carries in his heart and puts into his verse. He is a muser, a Platonist, who is penetrated by the ancient teaching, who takes things from a high point of view, who places the excellence of poetry not in pleasing effect, imitation or rhyme, but in

[1] *Céladon*, a rustic lover in *Astrée*, a French novel in five volumes, named after the heroine, and written by d'Urfé (d. 1625).—Tr.

[2] *Arcadia*, ed. fol. 1629, p. 117. [3] *Ibid.* book ii. p. 114.

this creative and superior conception by which the artist dresses and embellishes nature. At the same time, he is an ardent man, trusting in the nobleness of his aspirations and in the width of his ideas, who scorns the brawling of the shoppy, narrow, vulgar Puritanism, and glows with the lofty irony, the proud freedom, of a poet and a lord.

In his eyes, if there is any art or science capable of augmenting and cultivating our generosity, it is poetry. He draws comparison after comparison between it and philosophy or history, whose pretensions he laughs at and dismisses.[1] He fights for poetry as a knight for his lady, and in what heroic and splendid style! He says:

'I never heard the old Song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet: and yet it is sung but by some blinde Crowder, with no rougher voyce, than rude stile; which beeing so evill apparelled in the dust and Cobweb of that uncivill age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare?'[2]

The philosopher repels, the poet attracts:

'Nay hee doth as if your journey should lye through a faire vineyard, at the very first, give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that tast, you may long to passe further.'[3]

What description of poetry can displease you? Pastoral so easy and genial?

'Is it the bitter but wholesome Iambicke, who rubbes the galled minde, making shame the Trumpet of villanie, with bold and open crying out against naughtinesse?'[4]

At the close he reviews his arguments, and the vibrating martial accent of his poetical period is like a trump of victory:

'So that since the excellencies of it (poetry) may bee so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soone trodden downe, it not being an Art of lyes, but of true doctrine; not of effeminatenesse, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthning man's wit; not banished, but honoured by Plato; let us rather plant more Laurels for to ingarland the Poets heads than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers, once to blow upon the cleare springs of Poesie.'[5]

From such vehemence and gravity you may anticipate what his verses will be.

Often, after reading the poets of this age, I have looked for some

[1] *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. fol. 1629, p. 558: 'I dare undertake, that Orlando Furioso, or honest King Arthur, will never displease a soldier: but the quidditie of *Ens* and *prima materia*, will hardly agree with a Corselet.' See also, in these pages, the very lively and spirited personification of History and Philosophy. It contains genuine talent.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 553. [3] *Ibid.* p. 550. [4] *Ibid.* p. 552.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 560. Here and there we find also verse as spirited as this:

'Or Pindar's Apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
Enam'ling with pide flowers their thoughts of gold.'—(3d Sonnet.)

time at the contemporary prints, telling myself that man, body and soul, was not then such as we see him to-day. We also have our passions, but we are no longer strong enough to bear them. They distract us; we are not poets without suffering for it. Alfred de Musset, Heine, Edgar Poe, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Cowper, how many shall I instance? Disgust, mental and bodily degradation, disease impotence, madness, suicide, at best a permanent hallucination or feverish raving,—these are now-a-days the ordinary issues of the poetic temperament. The passion of the brain gnaws our vitals, dries up the blood, eats into the marrow, shakes us like a tempest, and the skeleton man, to which civilisation has reduced us, is not substantial enough long to resist it. They, who have been more roughly trained, who are more inured to the inclemencies of climate, more hardened by bodily exercise, more firm against danger, endure and live. Is there a man living who could withstand the storm of passions and visions which swept over Shakspeare, and end, like him, as a sensible citizen and landed proprietor in his small county? The muscles were firmer, the despair less prompt. The rage of concentrated attention, the half hallucinations, the anguish and heaving of the heart, the quivering of the limbs stretching involuntarily and blindly for action, all the painful impulses which accompany large desires, exhausted them less; this is why they desired longer, and dared more. D'Aubigné, wounded with many sword-thrusts, conceiving death at hand, had himself bound on his horse that he might see his mistress once more, and rode thus several leagues, losing blood, and arriving in a swoon. Such feelings we glean still in their portraits, in the straight looks which pierce like a sword; in this strength of back, bent or twisted; in the sensuality, energy, enthusiasm, which breathe from their attitude or look. Such feelings we still discover in their poetry, in Greene, Lodge, Jonson, Spenser, Shakspeare, in Sidney, as in all the rest. We quickly forget the faults of taste which accompany it, the affectation, the uncouth jargon. Is it really so uncouth? Imagine a man who with closed eyes distinctly sees the adored countenance of his mistress, who keeps it before him all the day; who is troubled and shaken as he imagines ever and anon her brow, her lips, her eyes; who cannot and would not be separated from his vision; who sinks daily deeper in this passionate contemplation; who is every instant crushed by mortal anxieties, or transported by the raptures of bliss: he will lose the exact conception of objects. A fixed idea becomes a false idea. By dint of regarding an object under all its forms, turning it over, piercing through it, we at last deform it. When we cannot think of a thing without dimness and tears, we magnify it, and give it a nature which it has not. Then strange comparisons, over-refined ideas, excessive images, become natural. However far Sidney goes, whatever object he touches, he sees throughout the universe only the name and features of Stella. All ideas bring him back to her. He is drawn ever and invincibly by the same thought; and comparisons which

seem far-fetched, only express the unfailing presence and sovereign power of the besetting image. Stella is ill; it seems to Sidney that 'Joy, which is inseparate from those eyes, Stella, now learnes (strange case) to weepe in thee.'[1] To us, the expression is absurd. Is it for Sidney, who for hours together had dwelt on the expression of those eyes, seeing in them at last all the beauties of heaven and earth, who, compared to them, finds all light dull and all joy stale? Consider that in every extreme passion ordinary laws are reversed, that our logic cannot pass judgment on it, that we find in it affectation, childishness, fancifulness, crudity, folly, and that to us violent conditions of the nervous machine are like an unknown and marvellous land, where common sense and good language cannot penetrate. On the return of spring, when May spreads over the fields her dappled dress of new flowers, Astrophel and Stella sit in the shade of a retired grove, in the warm air, full of birds' voices and pleasant exhalations. Heaven smiles, the wind kisses the trembling leaves, the inclining trees interlace their sappy branches, amorous earth sighs greedily for the rippling water:

'In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton musicke made,
May, then yong, his py'd weeds showing,
New perfum'd with flowers fresh growing,

'Astrophel with Stella sweet,
Did for mutuall comfort meet,
Both within themselves oppressed,
But each in the other blessed. . . .

'Their eares hungry of each word,
Which the deere tongue would afford,
But their tongues restrain'd from walking,
Till their hearts had ended talking.

'But when their tongues could not speake,
Love it selfe did silence breake;
Love did set his lips asunder,
Thus to speake in love and wonder. . . .

'This small winde which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kisse,
Each tree in his best attyring,
Sense of love to love inspiring.'[2]

On his knees, with beating heart, oppressed, it seems to him that his mistress is transformed:

'Stella, soveraigne of my joy, . . .
Stella, starre of heavenly fire,
Stella, load-starre of desire,

[1] *Astrophel and Stella*, ed. fol. 1629, 101st sonnet, p. 618.
[2] *Ibid.* 8th song, p. 603.

Stella, in whose shining eyes
Are the lights of Cupid's skies. . . .
Stella, whose voice when it speakes
Senses all asunder breakes;
Stella, whose voice when it singeth,
Angels to acquaintance bringeth.'[1]

These cries of adoration are like a hymn. Every day he writes thoughts of love which agitate him, and in this long journal of a hundred pages we feel the inflamed breath swell each moment. A smile from his mistress, a curl lifted by the wind, a gesture,—all are events. He paints her in every attitude; he cannot see her too constantly. He talks to the birds, plants, winds, all nature. He brings the whole world to Stella's feet. At the notion of a kiss he swoons:

'Thinke of that most gratefull time
When thy leaping heart will climbe,
In my lips to have his biding.
There those roses for to kisse,
Which doe breath a sugred blisse,
Opening rubies, pearles dividing.'[2]

'O joy, too high for my low stile to show:
O blisse, fit for a nobler state then me:
Envie, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What Oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend, that oft saw through all maskes my wo,
Come, come, and let me powre my selfe on thee;
Gone is the winter of my miserie,
My spring appeares, O see what here doth grow,
For Stella hath with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart giv'n me the monarchie:
I, I, O I may say that she is mine.'[3]

There are Oriental splendours in the sparkling sonnet in which he asks why Stella's cheeks have grown pale:

'Where be those Roses gone, which sweetned so our eyes?
Where those red cheekes, which oft with faire encrease doth frame
The height of honour in the kindly badge of shame?
Who hath the crimson weeds stolne from my morning skies?'[4]

As he says, his 'life melts with too much thinking.' Exhausted by ecstasy, he pauses; then he flies from thought to thought, seeking a cure for his wound, like the Satyr whom he describes:

'Prometheus, when first from heaven hie
He brought downe fire, ere then on earth not seene,
Fond of delight, a Satyr standing by,
Gave it a kisse, as it like sweet had beene.

[1] *Astrophel and Stella*, 8th song, p. 603.
[2] *Ibid.* 10th song, p. 610.
[3] *Ibid.* sonnet 69, p. 555.
[4] *Ibid.* sonnet 102, p. 614

'Feeling forthwith the other burning power,
Wood with the smart with showts and shryking shrill,
He sought his ease in river, field, and bower,
But for the time his griefe went with him still.'[1]

At last calm returned; and whilst this calm lasts, the lively, glowing spirit plays like a flame on the surface of the deep brooding fire. His love-songs and word-portraits, delightful pagan and chivalric fancies, seem to be inspired by Petrarch or Plato. One feels the charm and liveliness under the seeming affectation:

'Faire eyes, sweete lips, deare heart, that foolish I
Could hope by Cupids helpe on you to pray;
Since to himselfe he doth your gifts apply,
As his maine force, choise sport, and easefull stray.

For when he will see who dare him gainsay,
Then with those eyes he lookes, lo by and by
Each soule doth at Loves feet his weapons lay,
Glad if for her he give them leave to die.

'When he will play, then in her lips he is,
Where blushing red, that Loves selfe them doth love,
With either lip he doth the other kisse:
But when he will for quiets sake remove
From all the world, her heart is then his rome,
Where well he knowes, no man to him can come.'[2]

Both heart and sense are captive here. If he finds the eyes of Stella more beautiful than anything in the world, he finds her soul more lovely than her body. He is a Platonist when he recounts how Virtue, wishing to be loved of men, took Stella's form to enchant their eyes, and make them see the heaven which the inner sense reveals to heroic souls. We recognise in him that entire submission of heart, love turned into a religion, perfect passion which asks only to grow, and which, like the piety of the mystics, finds itself too insignificant when it compares itself with the object loved:

'My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toyes,
My wit doth strive those passions to defend,
Which for reward spoyle it with vaine annoyes,
I see my course to lose my selfe doth bend:
I see and yet no greater sorrow take,
Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.'[3]

At last, like Socrates in the banquet, he turns his eyes to deathless beauty, heavenly brightness:

[1] *Astrophel and Stella*, p. 525: this sonnet is headed E. D. Wood, in his *Athen. Oxon.* i., says it was written by Sir Edward Dyer, Chancellor of the Most noble Order of the Garter.—TR.

[2] *Ibid.* sonnet 43, p. 545.

[3] *Ibid.* sonnet 18, p. 573.

'Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust,
And thou my minde aspire to higher things:
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings. . . .
O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
In this small course which birth drawes out to death.'[1]

Divine love continues the earthly love; he was imprisoned in this, and frees himself. By this nobility, these lofty aspirations, recognise one of those serious souls of which there are so many in the same climate and race. Spiritual instincts pierce through the dominant paganism, and ere they make Christians, make Platonists.

V.

Sidney was only a soldier in an army; there is a multitude about him, a multitude of poets. In fifty-two years, beyond the drama, two hundred and thirty-three are enumerated,[2] of whom forty have genius or talent: Breton, Donne, Drayton, Lodge, Greene, the two Fletchers, Beaumont, Spenser, Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Wither, Warner, Davison, Carew, Suckling, Herrick;—we should grow tired in counting them. There is a crop of them, and so there is at the same time in Catholic and heroic Spain; and as in Spain, it was a sign of the times, the mark of a public want, the index to an extraordinary and transient condition of the mind. What is this condition which gives rise to so universal a taste for poetry? What is it breathes life into their books? How happens it, that amongst the least, in spite of pedantries, awkwardnesses, in the rhyming chronicles or descriptive cyclopedias, we meet with brilliant pictures and genuine love-cries? How happens it, that when this generation was exhausted, true poetry ended in England, as true painting in Italy and Flanders? It was because an epoch of the mind came and passed away,—that, namely, of instinctive and creative conception. These men had new senses, and no theories in their heads. Their emotions were not the same as ours. What is the sunrise to an ordinary man? A white smudge on the edge of the sky, between bosses of clouds, amid pieces of land, and bits of road, which he sees not because he has seen them a hundred times. But for them, all things have a soul; I mean that they feel naturally, within themselves, the uprising and severance of the outlines, the power and contrast of tints, the sad or delicious sentiment, which breathes from this combination and union like a harmony or a cry. How sorrowful is the sun, as he rises in a mist above the sad sea-furrows; what an air of resignation in the old trees rustling in the night rain; what a feverish tumult in the mass of waves,

[1] Last sonnet p. 539.

[2] Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, i. Part 2, ch. 2, 3 4. Among these 233 poets the authors of isolated pieces are not reckoned, but only those who published or gathered their works together.

whose dishevelled locks are twisted for ever on the surface of the abyss! But the great torch of heaven, the luminous god, emerges and shines; the tall, soft, pliant herbs, the evergreen meadows, the expanding roof of lofty oaks,—the whole English landscape, continually renewed and illumined by the flooding moisture, diffuses an inexhaustible freshness. These meadows, red and white with flowers, ever moist and ever young, slip off their veil of golden mist, and appear suddenly, timidly, like beautiful virgins. Here is the cuckoo-flower, which springs up before the coming of the swallow. Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, sings:

> 'Then from her burnisht gate the goodly glittring East
> Guilds every lofty top, which late the humorous night
> Bespangled had with pearle, to please the Mornings sight:
> On which the mirthfull Quires, with their clere open throats,
> Unto the joyfull Morne so straine their warbling notes,
> That Hills and Valleys ring, and even the ecchoing Ayre
> Seemes all compos'd of sounds, about them everywhere. . . .
> Thus sing away the Morne, untill the mounting Sunne,
> Through thick exhaled fogs, his golden head hath runne,
> And through the twisted tops of our close Covert creeps,
> To kiss the gentle Shade, this while that sweetly sleeps.'[1]

A step further, and you will find the old gods reappear. They reappear, these living gods—these living gods mingled with things which you cannot help meeting as soon as you meet nature again. Shakspeare, in the *Tempest*, sings:

> Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
> Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease;
> Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
> And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to keep;
> Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims,
> Which spongy April at thy hest betrims,
> To make cold nymphs chaste crowns . . .
> Hail, many-colour'd messenger (Iris.) . . .
> Who with thy saffron wings upon my flowers
> Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers,
> And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown
> My bosky acres and my unshrubb'd down.'[2]

In *Cymbeline* he says:

> 'As gentle as zephyrs blowing below the violet,
> Not wagging his sweet head.'[3]

Greene, in *Never too Late*, says:

> 'When Flora proud, in pomp of all her flowers,
> Sat bright and gay,
> And gloried in the dew of Iris' showers,
> And did display
> Her mantle chequer'd all with gaudy green.'[4]

[1] M. Drayton's *Polyolbion*, ed. 1622, 13th song, p. 214.

[2] Act iv. 1.

[3] Act iv. 2.

[4] Greene's Poems, ed. Bell, *Eurymachus in Laudem Mirimidiæ*, p. 73.

In the same piece he speaks:

'How oft have I descending Titan seen,
His burning locks couch in the sea-queen's lap,
And beauteous Thetis his red body wrap
In watery robes, as he her lord had been!'[1]

So Spenser, in his *Faërie Queene*, sings:

'The ioyous day gan early to appeare;
And fayre Aurora from the deawy bed
Of aged Tithone gan herself to reare
With rosy cheekes, for shame as blushing red:
Her golden locks, for hast, were loosely shed
About her eares, when Una her did marke
Clymbe to her charet, all with flowers spred,
From heven high to chace the chearelesse darke;
With mery note her lowd salutes the mounting larke.'[2]

All the splendour and sweetness of this well-watered land; all the specialties, the opulence of its dissolving tints, of its variable sky, its luxuriant vegetation, assemble about the gods, who gave them their beautiful form.

In the life of every man there are moments when, in presence of objects, he experiences a shock. This mass of ideas, of mangled recollections, of mutilated images, which lie hidden in all corners of his mind, are set in motion, organised, suddenly developed like a flower. He is enraptured; he cannot help looking at and admiring the charming creature which has just appeared; he wishes to see it still, and others like it, and dreams of nothing else. There are such moments in the life of nations, and this is one of them. They are happy in contemplating beautiful things, and wish only that they should be the most beautiful possible. They are not preoccupied, as we are, with theories. They do not labour to express moral or philosophical ideas. They wish to enjoy through the imagination, through the eyes, like these Italian nobles, who, at the same time, were so captivated by fine colours and forms, that they covered with paintings not only their rooms and their churches, but the lids of their chests and the saddles of their horses. The rich and green sunny country; young, gaily-attired ladies, blooming with health and love; half-draped gods and goddesses, masterpieces and models of strength and grace,—these are the most lovely objects which man can contemplate, the most capable of satisfying his senses and his heart—of giving rise to smiles and to joy; and these are the objects which occur in all the poets in a most wonderful abundance of songs, pastorals, sonnets, little fugitive pieces, so lively, delicate, easily unfolded, that we have never since had their equals. What though Venus and Cupid have lost their altars? Like

[1] Greene's Poems, *Melicertus' Description of his Mistress*, p. 38

[2] Spenser's *Works*, ed. Todd, 1863, *The Faërie Queene*, i. c. 11, st. 51.

the contemporary painters of Italy, they willingly imagine a beautiful naked child, drawn on a chariot of gold through the limpid air; or a woman, redolent with youth, standing on the waves, which kiss her snowy feet. Harsh Ben Jonson is ravished with the scene. The disciplined battalion of his sturdy verses changes into a band of little graceful strophes, which trip as lightly as Raphael's children. He sees his lady approach, sitting on the chariot of Love, drawn by swans and doves. Love leads the car; she passes calm and smiling, and all hearts, charmed by her divine looks, wish no other joy than to see and serve her for ever.

'See the chariot at hand here of Love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
And well the car Love guideth.
As she goes, all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty;
And, enamour'd, do wish, so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.
Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that Love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As Love's star when it riseth! . . .
Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o' the snow,
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!'[1]

What more lively, more unlike measured and artificial mythology? Like Theocritus and Moschus, they play with their laughing gods, and their belief becomes a festival. One day, in an alcove of a wood, Cupid meets a nymph asleep:

'Her golden hair o'erspread her face,
Her careless arms abroad were cast,
Her quiver had her pillow's place,
Her breast lay bare to every blast.'[2]

He approaches softly, steals her arrows, and puts his own in their place. She hears a noise at last, raises her reclining head, and sees a

[1] Ben Jonson's Poems, ed. R. Bell. *Celebration of Charis; her Triumph*, p. 125

[2] *Cupid's Pastime*, unknown author, ab. 1621.

shepherd approaching, She flees; he pursues. She strings her bow, and shoots her arrows at him. He only becomes more ardent, and is on the point of seizing her. In despair, she takes an arrow, and buries it in her lovely body. Lo! she is changed, she stops, smiles, loves, draws near him.

'Though mountains meet not, lovers may.
What other lovers do, did they.
The god of Love sat on a tree,
And taught that pleasant sight to see.'[1]

A drop of malice falls into the medley of artlessness and voluptuousness; it was so in Longus, and in all that delicious nosegay called the *Anthology*. Not the dry mocking of Voltaire, of folks who possessed only wit, and always lived in a drawing-room; but the raillery of artists, lovers whose brains are full of colour and form, who, when they recount a bit of roguishness, imagine a stooping neck, lowered eyes, the blushing of vermilion cheeks. One of these fair ones says the following verses, simpering, and we can even see now the pouting of her lips:

'Love in my bosom like a bee
Doth suck his sweet.
Now with his wings he plays with me,
Now with his feet.

Within my eyes he makes his rest,
His bed amid my tender breast,
My kisses are his daily feast.
And yet he robs me of my rest.
Ah! wanton, will ye!'[2]

What relieves these sportive pieces is their splendour of imagination. There are effects and flashes which one hardly dare quote, dazzling and maddening, as in the *Song of Songs:*

'Her eyes, fair eyes, like to the purest lights
That animate the sun, or cheer the day,
In whom the shining sunbeams brightly play,
Whiles fancy doth on them divine delights.

Her cheeks like ripened lilies steeped in wine,
Or fair pomegranate kernels washed in milk,
Or snow-white threads in nets of crimson silk,
Or gorgeous clouds upon the sun's decline.

Her lips are roses over-washed with dew,
Or like the purple of Narcissus' flower . . .

Her crystal chin like to the purest mould
Enchased with dainty daisies soft and white,
Where fancy's fair pavilion once is pight,
Whereas embraced his beauties he doth hold.

[1] *Cupid's Pastime*, unknown author, ab. 1621.
[2] *Rosalind's Madrigal.*

Her neck like to an ivory shining tower,
Where through with azure veins sweet nectar runs,
Or like the down of swans where Senesse woons,
Or like delight that doth itself devour.

Her paps are like fair apples in the prime,
As round as orient pearls, as soft as down;
They never vail their fair through winter's frown,
But from their sweets love sucked his summer time.'[1]

'What need compare, where sweet exceeds compare?
Who draws his thoughts of love from senseless things,
Their pomp and greatest glories doth impair,
And mounts love's heaven with overladen wings.'[2]

I can well believe that things had no more beauty then than now; but I am sure that men found them more beautiful.

When the power of embellishment is so great, it is natural that they should paint the sentiment which unites all joys, whither all dreams converge, ideal love, and in particular, artless and happy love. Of all sentiments, there is none for which we have more sympathy. It is of all the most simple and sweet. It is the first motion of the heart, and the first word of nature. It is made up of innocence and self-abandonment. It is clear of reflections and effort. It extricates us from complicated passion, contempt, regret, hate, violent desires. It penetrates us, and we breathe it as the fresh breath of the morning wind, which has swept over flowery meads. They inhaled it, and were enraptured, the knights of this perilous court, and so rested in the contrast from their actions and their dangers. The most severe and tragic of their poets turned aside to meet it, Shakspeare among the evergreen oaks of the forest of Arden,[3] Ben Jonson in the woods of Sherwood,[4] amid the wide shady glades, the shining leaves and moist flowers, trembling on the margin of lonely springs. Marlowe himself, the terrible painter of the agony of Edward II., the impressive and powerful poet, who wrote *Faustus*, *Tamerlane*, and the *Jew of Malta*, leaves his sanguinary dramas, his high-sounding verse, his images of fury, and nothing can be more musical and sweet than his song. A shepherd, to gain his lady-love, says to her:

'Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.
There we will sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,

[1] Greene's *Poems*, ed. R. Bell, *Menaphon's Eclogue*, p. 41.
[2] *Ibid. Melicertus' Eclogue*, p. 43.
[3] *As you Like it.*
[4] *The Sad Shepherd.* See also Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*

By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.
There I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers and a kirtle,
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.
A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love. . . .
The shepherd swains shall dance and sing,
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.'[1]

The unpolished gentlemen of the period, returning from a falcon hunt, were more than once arrested by such a rustic picture; such as they were, that is to say, imaginative and not very citizen-like, they had dreamed of figuring in them on their own account. But while entering into, they reconstructed them; in their parks, prepared for the queen's entrance, with a profusion of costumes and devices, not troubling themselves to copy rough nature exactly. Improbability did not disturb them; they were not minute imitators, students of manners: they created; the country for them was but a setting, and the complete picture came from their fancies and their hearts. Romantic it may have been, even impossible, but it was on this account the more charming. Is there a greater charm than putting on one side this actual world which fetters or oppresses us, to float vaguely and easily in the azure and the light, on the summit of the land of fairies and clouds, to arrange things according to the pleasure of the moment, no longer feeling the oppressive laws, the harsh and resisting framework of life, adorning and varying everything after the caprice and the refinements of fancy? That is what is done in these little poems. Usually the events are such as happen nowhere, or happen in the land where kings turn shepherds and marry shepherdesses. The beautiful Argentile[2] is detained at her uncle's court, who wishes to deprive her of her kingdom,

[1] This poem was, and still is, frequently attributed to Shakspeare. It appears as his in Knight's edition, published a few years ago. Isaac Walton, however, writing about fifty years after Marlowe's death, attributes it to him. In Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* it is also ascribed to the same author. As a confirmation, let us state that Itharnore, in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, says to the courtesan (Act iv. Sc. 4): 'Thou in those groves, by Dis above,
Shalt live with me, and be my love.'—TR.

[2] *Chalmer's English Poets*, William Warner, *Fourth Book of Albion's England*, ch. xx. p. 551.

and commands her to marry Curan, a boor in his service; she flees, and Curan in despair goes and lives two years among the shepherds. One day he meets a beautiful country-woman, and loves her; while speaking to her he thinks of Argentile, and weeps; he describes her sweet face, her lithe figure, her blue-veined delicate wrists, and suddenly sees that the peasant girl is weeping. She falls into his arms, and says, 'I am Argentile.' Now Curan was a king's son, who had disguised himself thus for love of Argentile. He resumes his armour, and defeats the wicked king. There was never a braver knight; and they both reigned long in Northumberland. From a hundred such tales, tales of the spring-time, the reader will perhaps bear with me while I pick out one more, gay and simple as a May morning. The Princess Dowsabel came down one morning into her father's garden: she gathers honeysuckles, primroses, violets, and daisies; then, behind a hedge, she heard a shepherd singing, and that so finely that she loved him at once. He promises to be faithful, and asks for a kiss. Her cheeks became as crimson as a rose:

'With that she bent her snow-white knee,
Down by the shepherd kneeled she,
And him she sweetly kiss'd.
With that the shepherd whoop'd for joy;
Quoth he: "There 's never shepherd boy
That ever was so blest."'[1]

Nothing more; is it not enough? It is but a moment's fancy; but they had such fancies every moment. Think what poetry was likely to spring from them, how superior to common events, how free from literal imitation, how smitten with ideal beauty, how capable of creating a world beyond our sad world. In fact, among all these poems there is one truly divine, so divine that the reasoners of succeeding ages have found it wearisome, that even now but few understand it—Spenser's *Faërie Queene.*

One day Monsieur Jourdain, having turned Mamamouchi[2] and learned orthography, sent for the most illustrious writers of the age. He settled himself in his arm-chair, pointed with his finger at several folding-stools for them to sit down, and said:

'I have read your little productions, gentlemen. They have afforded me much pleasure. I wish to give you some work to do I have given some lately to little Lulli,[3] your fellow-labourer. It was at my command that he introduced the sea-shell at his concerts,—a melodious instrument, which no one knew of before, and which has such a pleasing effect. I insist that you will work out my ideas as he

[1] *Chalmers' English Poets,* M. Drayton's *Fourth Eclogue,* iv. p. 436.

[2] Mons. Jourdain is the hero of Molière's comedy, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* the type of a vulgar and successful upstart; Mamamouchi is a mock dignity.—Tr.

[3] Lulli, a celebrated Italian composer of the time of Molière Tr.

has worked them out, and I give you an order for a poem in prose. What is not prose, you know, is verse; and what is not verse, is prose. When I say, "Nicolle, bring me my slippers and give me my night-cap," I speak prose. Take this sentence as your model. This style is much more pleasing than the jargon of unfinished lines which you call verse. As for the subject, let it be myself. You will describe my flowered dressing-gown which I have put on to receive you in, and this little green velvet undress which I wear underneath, to do my morning exercise in. You will set down that this chintz costs a louis an ell. The description, if well worked out, will furnish some very pretty paragraphs, and will enlighten the public as to the cost of things. I desire also that you should speak of my mirrors, my carpets, my hangings. My tradesmen will let you have their bills; don't fail to put them in. I shall be glad to read in your works, all fully and naturally set forth, about my father's shop, who, like a real gentleman, sold cloth to oblige his friends; my maid Nicolle's kitchen, the genteel behaviour of Brusquet, the little dog of my neighbour M. Dimanche. You might also explain my domestic affairs: there is nothing more interesting to the public than to hear how a million may be scraped together. Tell them also that my daughter Lucile has not married that little rascal Cléonte, but M. Samuel Bernard, who made his fortune as a *fermier-général*, keeps his carriage, and is going to be a minister of state. For this I will pay you liberally, half a louis for a yard of writing. Come back in a month, and let me see what my ideas have suggested to you.'

We are the descendants of M. Jourdain, and this is how we have been talking to the men of talent from the beginning of the century, and the men of talent have listened to us. Hence arise our shoppy and realistic novels. I pray the reader to forget them, to forget himself, to become for a while a poet, a gentleman, a man of the sixteenth century. Unless we bury the M. Jourdain who survives in us, we shall never understand Spenser.

VI.

Spenser belonged to an ancient family, allied to great houses; was a friend of Sidney and Raleigh, the two most accomplished knights of the age—a knight himself, at least in heart; who had found in his connections, his friendships, his studies, his life, everything calculated to lead him to ideal poetry. We find him at Cambridge, where he imbues himself with the noblest ancient philosophies; in a northern country, where he passes through a deep and unfortunate passion; at Penshurst, in the castle and in the society where the *Arcadia* was produced; with Sidney, in whom survived entire the romantic poetry and heroic generosity of the feudal spirit; at court, where all the splendours of a disciplined and gorgeous chivalry were gathered about the throne; finally, at Kilcolman, on the borders of a beautiful lake,

in a lonely castle, from which the view embraced an amphitheatre of mountains, and the half of Ireland. Poor on the other hand, not fit for court, and though favoured by the queen, unable to obtain from his patrons anything but inferior employment; in the end, tired of solicitations, and banished to dangerous Ireland, whence a revolt expelled him, after his house and child had been burned; he died three months later, of misery and a broken heart.[1] Expectations and rebuffs, many sorrows and many dreams, some few joys, and a sudden and frightful calamity, a small fortune and a premature end; this indeed was a poet's life. But the heart within was the true poet—from it all proceeded; circumstances furnished the subject only; he transformed them more than they him; he received less than he gave. Philosophy and landscapes, ceremonies and ornaments, splendours of the country and the court, on all which he painted or thought, he impressed his inward nobleness. Before all, his was a soul captivated by sublime and chaste beauty, eminently platonic; one of these lofty and refined souls most charming of all, who, born in the lap of nature, draw thence their mother's milk, but soar above, enter the regions of mysticism, and mount instinctively in order to open at the confines of another world. Spenser leads us to Milton, and thence to Puritanism, as Plato to Virgil, and thence to Christianity. Sensuous beauty is perfect in both, but their main worship is for moral beauty. He appeals to the Muses:

> 'Revele to me the sacred noursery
> Of vertue, which with you doth there remaine,
> Where it in silver bowre does hidden ly
> From view of men and wicked worlds disdaine!'

He encourages his knight when he sees him droop. He is wroth when he sees him attacked. He rejoices in his justice, temperance, courtesy. He introduces in the beginning of a song, stanzas in honour of friendship and justice. He pauses, after relating a lovely instance of chastity, to exhort women to modesty. He pours out the wealth of his respect and tenderness at his heroine's feet. If any coarse man insults them, he calls to their aid nature and the gods. Never does he bring them on his stage without adorning their name with splendid eulogy. He has an adoration for beauty worthy of Dante and Plotinus. And this, because he never considers it a mere harmony of colour and form, but an emanation of unique, heavenly, imperishable beauty, which no mortal eye can see, and which is the prime work of the great Author of the worlds.[2] Bodies only render it sensible; it does not live in the bodies; grace and attraction are

[1] 'He died for want of bread in King Street.' Ben Jonson, quoted by Drummond.

[2] *Hymns of Love and Beauty; of heavenly Love and Beauty.*

not in things, but in the deathless idea which shines through the things:

'For that same goodly hew of white and red,
With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shall decay
And those sweete rosy leaves, so fairly spred
Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away
To that they were, even to corrupted clay:
That golden wyre, those sparckling stars so bright,
Shall turne to dust, and lose their goodly light.
But that faire lampe, from whose celestiall ray
That light proceedes, which kindleth lovers fire,
Shall never be extinguisht nor decay;
But, when the vitall spirits doe expyre,
Upon her native planet shall retyre;
For it is heavenly borne, and cannot die,
Being a parcell of the purest skie.'[1]

In presence of this ideal of beauty, love is transformed:

'For Love is lord of Truth and Loialtie,
Lifting himself out of the lowly dust,
On golden plumes up to the purest skie,
Above the reach of loathly sinfull lust,
Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
Of his weake wings dare not to heaven fly,
But like a moldwarpe in the earth doth ly.'[2]

Love such as this contains all that is good, and fine, and noble. It is the prime source of life, and of the eternal soul of things. It is this love which, pacifying the primitive discord, has created the harmony of the spheres, and maintains this glorious universe. It dwells in God, and is God Himself, descended in bodily form to regenerate the tottering world and save the human race; around and within animated beings, when our eyes can pierce it, we behold it as a living light, penetrating and embracing every creature. We touch here the sublime sharp summit where the world of mind and the world of senses unite; where man, gathering with both hands the loveliest flowers of either, feels himself at the same time a pagan and a Christian.

So much, as a testimony to his heart. But he was also a poet, that is, pre-eminently a creator and a dreamer, and that most naturally, instinctively, unceasingly. We might go on for ever describing this inward condition of all great artists; there would still remain much to be described. It is a sort of spiritual growth with them; at every instant a bud shoots forth, and on this another, and still

[1] *A Hymne in Honour of Beautie*, v. 92–105.
[2] *A Hymne in Honour of Love*, v. 176–182.

another; each producing, increasing, blooming of itself, so that instantaneously we find first a plant, then a thicket, then a forest. A character appears to them, then an action, then a landscape, then a succession of actions, characters, landscapes, producing, completing, arranging themselves by instinctive development, as when in a dream we behold a train of figures which spread out and group themselves before our eyes. This fount of living and changing forms is inexhaustible in Spenser; he is always imaging; it is his specialty. He has but to close his eyes, and apparitions arise; they abound in him, crowd, overflow; in vain he pours them forth; they continually float up, more copious and more dense. Many times, following the inexhaustible stream, I have thought of the vapours which rise incessantly from the sea, ascend, sparkle, commingle their gold and snowy scrolls, while beneath them new mists arise, and others again beneath, and the splendid procession never grows dim or ceases.

But what distinguishes him from all others is the mode of his imagination. Generally with a poet his spirit ferments vehemently and by fits and starts; his ideas gather, jostle each other, suddenly appear in masses and heaps, and burst out in sharp, piercing, concentrative words; it seems that they need these sudden accumulations to imitate the unity and life-like energy of the objects which they reproduce; at least almost all the surrounding poets, Shakspeare at their head, act thus. Spenser remains calm in the fervour of invention. The visions which would be fever to another, leave him at peace. They come and spread before him, easily, entire, uninterrupted, without starts. He is epic, that is, a narrator, and not a singer like an ode-writer, nor a mimic like a play-writer. No modern is more like Homer. Like Homer and the great epic-writers, he presents consecutive and noble, almost classical images, so nearly ideas, that the mind seizes them unaided and unawares. Like Homer, he is always simple and clear: he makes no leap, he omits no argument, he robs no word of its primitive and ordinary sense, he preserves the natural sequence of ideas. Like Homer again, he is redundant, ingenuous, even childish. He says everything, he puts down reflections which we have made beforehand; he repeats without limit his ornamental epithets. We can see that he beholds objects in a beautiful uniform light, with infinite detail; that he wishes to show all this detail, never fearing to see his happy dream change or disappear; that he traces its outline with a regular movement, never hurrying or slackening. He is even a little prolix, too unmindful of the public, too ready to lose himself and fall into a dream. His thought expands in vast repeated comparisons, like those of the old Ionic poet. If a wounded giant falls, he finds him

> 'As an aged tree,
> High growing on the top of rocky clift,
> Whose hart-strings with keene steele nigh hewen be

The mightie trunck halfe rent with ragged rift,
Doth roll adowne the rocks, and fall with fearefull drift.

Or as a castle, reared high and round,
By subtile engins and malitious slight
Is undermined from the lowest ground,
And her foundation forst, and feebled quight,
At last downe falles; and with her heaped hight
Her hastie ruine does more heavie make,
And yields it selfe unto the victours might:
Such was this Gyaunt's fall, that seemd to shake
The stedfast globe of earth, as it for feare did quake. [1]

He develops all the ideas which he handles. He stretches all his phrases into periods. Instead of compressing, he expands. To bear this ample thought and its accompanying train, he requires a long stanza, ever renewed, long recurring lines, reiterated rhymes, whose uniformity and fulness recall majestic sounds which undulate eternally through the woods and the fields. To expand these epic faculties, and to expand them in the sublime region where his soul is naturally borne, he requires an ideal stage, situated beyond the bounds of reality, with personages who could hardly exist, and in a world which could never be.

He made many miscellaneous attempts in sonnets, elegies, pastorals, hymns of love, little sparkling word pictures;[2] they were but essays, incapable for the most part of supporting his genius. Yet already his magnificent imagination appeared in them; gods, men, landscapes, the world which he sets in motion is a thousand miles from that in which we live. His *Shepherd's Calendar*[3] is a pensive and tender pastoral, full of delicate loves, noble sorrows, lofty ideas, where no voice is heard but of thinkers and poets. His *Visions of Petrarch and Du Bellay* are admirable dreams, in which palaces, temples of gold, splendid landscapes, sparkling rivers, marvellous birds, appear alternately as in an Oriental fairy-tale. If he sings a 'Prothalamion,' he sees two beautiful swans, white as snow, who glide to the songs of nymphs amid vermeil roses, while the transparent water kisses their silken feathers, and murmurs with joy:

'There, in a meadow, by the river's side,
A flocke of Nymphes I chaunced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the Flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untyde,
As each had bene a bryde;
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs, entrayled curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, i. c. 8, st. 22, 23.

[2] *The Shepherd's Calendar*, *Amoretti*, *Sonnets*, *Prothalamion*, *Epithalamion*, *Muiopotmos*, *Virgil's Gnat*, *The Ruines of Time*, *The Teares of the Muses*, etc.

[3] Published in 1589; dedicated to Philip Sidney.

And with fine fingers cropt full feateously
The tender stalkes on hye.
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some; the violet, pallid blew,
The little dazie, that at evening closes,
The virgin lilie, and the primrose trew,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroomes posies
Against the brydale-day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song

With that I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe
Come softly swimming downe along the lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see;
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew . . .
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seem'd foule to them, and bad his billowes spare
To wet their silken feathers, least they might
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre,
And marre their beauties bright,
That shone as heavens light,
Against their brydale day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song!'[1]

If he bewails the death of Sidney, Sidney becomes a shepherd; he is slain like Adonis; around him gather weeping nymphs:

'The gods, which all things see, this same beheld,
And, pittying this paire of lovers trew,
Transformed them there lying on the field,
Into one flowre that is both red and blew:
It first growes red, and then to blew doth fade,
Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.

And in the midst thereof a star appeares,
As fairly formd as any star in skyes:
Resembling Stella in her freshest yeares,
Forth darting beames of beautie from her eyes;
And all the day it standeth full of deow,
Which is the teares, that from her eyes did flow.'[2]

His most genuine sentiments become thus fairy-like. Magic is the mould of his mind, and impresses its shape on all that he imagines or thinks. Involuntarily he robs objects of their ordinary form. If he looks at a landscape, after an instant he sees it quite differently. He carries it, without knowing it, into an enchanted land; the azure heaven sparkles like a vault of diamonds, meadows are clothed with flowers, a biped population flutters in the sweet air, palaces of jasper

[1] *Prothalamion*, v. 19–54 [2] *Astrophel*, v. 181–192.

shine among the trees, radiant ladies appear on carved balconies above galleries of emerald. This insensible toil of mind is like the slow crystallisations of nature. A moist twig is cast into the bottom of a mine, and is brought out again a hoop of diamonds.

At last he finds a subject which suits him, the greatest joy permitted to an artist. He removes his epic from the common ground which, in the hands of Homer and Dante, gave expression to a living creed, and depicted national heroes. He leads us to the summit of fairy-land, on that extreme verge where objects vanish and pure idealism begins:

'I have undertaken a work,' he says, 'to represent all the moral vertues, assigning to every vertue a knight to be the patron and defender of the same: in whose actions and feats of armes and chivalry the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten downe and overcome.'[1]

In fact, he gives us an allegory as the foundation of his poem, not that he dreams of becoming a wit, a preacher of moralities, a propounder of riddles. He does not subordinate image to idea; he is a seer, not a philosopher. They are living men and actions which he sets in motion; only from time to time, enchanted palaces, a whole train of splendid visions trembles and divides like a mist, enabling us to catch a glimpse of the thought which raised and arranged it. When in his Garden of Venus we see the countless forms of all living things arranged in due order, in close compass, awaiting life, we conceive with him the birth of universal love, the ceaseless fertility of the great mother, the mysterious swarm of creatures which rise in succession from her far-reaching womb. When we see his Knight of the Cross, combating with a monstrous woman-serpent in defence of his beloved lady Una, we dimly remember that, if we search beyond these two figures, we shall find behind one, Truth, behind the other, Falsehood. We perceive that his characters are not flesh and blood, and that all these brilliant phantoms are phantoms, and nothing more. We take pleasure in their brilliancy, without believing in their substantiality; we are interested in their acts, without troubling ourselves about their misfortunes. We know that their tears and cries are not real. Our emotion is purified and raised. We do not fall into gross illusion; we have that gentle feeling of knowing ourselves to be dreaming. We, like him, are a thousand leagues from actual life, beyond the pangs of painful pity, unmixed terror, urgent and bitter hatred. We entertain only refined sentiments, half defined, arrested at the moment that they were about to affect us with too sharp a stroke. They slightly touch us, and we find ourselves happy in being extricated from a belief which was beginning to be oppressive.

[1] Words attributed to him by Lodowick Bryskett, *Discourse of Civil Life* ed. 1606, p. 26.

VII.

What world could furnish materials to so elevated a fancy? One only, that of chivalry; for none is so far from the actual. Alone and independent in his castle, freed from all the ties which society, family, toil, usually impose on the actions of men, the feudal hero had attempted every kind of adventure, but yet he had done less than he imagined: the boldness of his deeds had been exceeded by the madness of his dreams. For want of useful employment and an accepted rule, his brain had laboured on an unreasoning and impossible track, and the urgency of his wearisomeness had increased beyond measure his craving for excitement. Under this stimulus his poetry had become a world of imagery. Insensibly strange conceptions had grown and multiplied in his brains, one over the other, like ivy woven round a tree, and the original stock had disappeared beneath their rank growth and their obstruction. The delicate fancies of the old Welsh poetry, the grand ruins of the German epics, the marvellous splendours of the conquered East, all the relics which four centuries of adventure had dispersed among the minds of men, had become gathered into one great dream; and giants, dwarfs, monsters, the whole medley of imaginary creatures, of superhuman exploits and splendid follies, were grouped about a unique conception, exalted and sublime love, like courtiers prostrated at the feet of their king. It was an ample and an elastic subject-matter, from which the great artists of the age, Ariosto, Tasso, Cervantes, Rabelais, had hewn their poems. But they belonged too completely to their own time, to admit of their belonging to one which had passed. They created a chivalry afresh, but it was not genuine. The ingenious Ariosto, an ironical epicurean, delights his gaze with it, and grows merry over it, like a man of pleasure, a sceptic who rejoices doubly in his pleasure, because it is sweet, and because it is forbidden. By his side poor Tasso, inspired by a fanatical, revived, factitious Catholicism, amid the tinsel of an old school of poetry, works on the same subject, in sickly fashion, with great effort and scant success. Cervantes, himself a knight, albeit he loves chivalry for its nobleness, perceives its folly, and crushes it to the ground, with heavy blows, in the mishaps of the wayside inns.[1] More coarsely, more openly, Rabelais, a rude commoner, drowns it with a burst of laughter in his merriment and nastiness. Spenser alone takes it seriously and naturally. He is on the level of so much nobleness, dignity, reverie. He is not yet settled and shut in by that species of exact common sense which was to found and cramp the whole modern civilisation. In his heart he inhabits the poetic and misty land from which men were daily drawing further and further away. He is enamoured of it, even to its very language; he retains

[1] 'Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away.'—BYRON'S *Don Juan*, canto xiii. st. xi.—TR.

the old words, the expressions of the middle-age, the style of Chaucer, especially in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. He enters straightway upon the strangest dreams of the old story-tellers, without astonishment, like a man who has still stranger ones on his own account. Enchanted castles, monsters and giants, duels in the woods, wandering ladies, all spring up under his hands, the mediæval fancy with the mediæval generosity; and it is just because this world is unlifelike that this world suits his humour.

Is there in chivalry sufficient to furnish him with matter? That is but one world, and he has another. Beyond the valiant men, the glorified images of moral virtues, he has the gods, finished models of sensible beauty; beyond Christian chivalry he has the pagan Olympus; beyond the idea of heroic will, which can only be satisfied by adventures and danger, he has the idea of calm energy, which is found in itself to be in harmony with actual existence. For such a poet there is not enough in one ideal; beside the beauty of effort he places the beauty of happiness; he couples them, not with the preconception of a philosopher, nor the design of a scholar like Goethe, but because they are both lovely; and here and there, amid weapons and passages of arms, he distributes satyrs, nymphs, Diana, Venus, like Greek statues amid the turrets and lofty trees of an English park. There is nothing forced in the union; the ideal epic, like a heaven above them, unites and harmonises the two worlds; a beautiful pagan dream carries on a beautiful dream of chivalry; the link consists in the fact that they are both beautiful. At this elevation the poet has ceased to observe the differences of races and civilisations. He can introduce into his picture whatever he will; his only reason is, 'That suited;' and there could be no better. Under the glossy-leaved oaks, by the old trunk so deeply rooted in the ground, he can see two knights cleaving each other, and the next instant a company of Fauns who came there to dance. The beams of light which have poured down upon the velvet moss, the wet turf of an English forest, can reveal the dishevelled locks and white shoulders of nymphs. Have you not seen it in Rubens? And what signify discrepancies in the happy and sublime illusion of a fancy? Are there more discrepancies? Who perceives them, who feels them? Who feels not, on the contrary, that to speak truth, there is but one world, that of Plato and the poets; that actual phenomena are but outlines—mutilated, incomplete, and blurred outlines—wretched abortions scattered here and there on Time's track, like fragments of clay, half moulded, then cast aside, lying in an artist's studio; that, after all, invisible forces and ideas, which for ever renew the actual existences, attain their fulfilment only in imaginary existences; and that the poet, in order to express nature in its entirety, is obliged to embrace in his sympathy all the ideal forms by which nature has been expressed? This is the greatness of his work; he has succeeded in seizing beauty in its fulness, because he cared for nothing but beauty.

The reader will feel that such a poem cannot be recounted. In fact, there are six poems, each of a dozen cantos, in which the action is ever diverging and converging again, becoming confused and starting again; and all the imaginations of antiquity and of the middle-age are, I believe, combined in it. The knight 'pricks along the plaine,' among the trees, and at a crossing of the paths meets other knights with whom he engages in combat; suddenly from within a cave appears a monster, half woman and half serpent, surrounded by a hideous offspring; further on a giant, with three bodies; then a dragon, great as a hill, with sharp talons and vast wings. For three days he fights him, and twice overthrown, he comes to himself only by aid of 'a gracious ointment.' After that there are savage tribes to be conquered, castles surrounded by flames to be captured. Meanwhile ladies are wandering in the midst of forests, on white palfreys, exposed to the assaults of miscreants, now guarded by a lion which follows them, now delivered by a band of satyrs who adore them. Magicians work manifold charms; palaces display their festivities; tilt-yards furnish tournaments; sea-gods, nymphs, fairies, kings, mingle feasts, surprises, dangers.

You will say it is a phantasmagoria. What matter, if we see it? And we do see it, for Spenser does. His sincerity wins us over. He is so much at home in this world, that we end by finding ourselves at home in it. He has no appearance of astonishment at astonishing events; he comes upon them so naturally, that he makes them natural; he defeats the miscreants, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Venus, Diana, and the old deities, dwell by his threshold, and enter, and he takes no notice of them. His serenity becomes ours. We grow credulous and happy by contagion, and to the same extent as he. How could it be otherwise? Is it possible to refuse credence to a man who paints things for us with so just a detail and in so lively colours? Here he describes a forest for you on a sudden; are you not instantly in it with him? Beech trees with their silvery stems, 'loftie trees iclad with sommers pride, did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide;' rays of light tremble on the bark and shine on the ground, on the reddening ferns and low bushes, which, suddenly smitten with the luminous track, glisten and glimmer. Footsteps are scarcely heard on the thick beds of heaped leaves; and at distant intervals, on the tall herbage, drops of dew are sparkling. Yet the sound of a horn reaches us through the foliage; how sweetly it falls on the ear, with what unlooked for cheer in this vast silence! It resounds more loudly; the clatter of a hunt draws near; 'eft through the thicke they heard one rudely rush; a nymph approaches, the most chaste and beautiful in the world Spenser sees her; more, he kneels before her:

> 'Her face so faire, as flesh it seemed not,
> But hevenly pourtraict of bright angels how,
> Cleare as the skye, withouten blame or blot,
> Through goodly mixture of complexions dew:

And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
The which ambrosiall odours from them threw,
And gazers sence with double pleasure fed,
Hable to heale the sicke and to revive the ded.

In her faire eyes two living lamps did flame,
Kindled above at th' Hevenly Makers light,
And darted fyrie beames out of the same,
So passing persant, and so wondrous bright,
That quite bereav'd the rash beholders sight:
In them the blinded god his lustfull fyre
To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
For, with dredd maiestie and awfull yre,
She broke his wanton darts, and quenched bace desyre.

Her yvorie forhead, full of bountie brave,
Like a broad table did itselfe dispred,
For Love his loftie triumphes to engrave,
And write the battailes of his great godhed:
All good and honour might therein be red;
For there their dwelling was. And, when she spake,
Sweete wordes, like dropping honny, she did shed;
And 'twixt the perles and rubins softly brake
A silver sound, that heavenly musicke seemd to make

Upon her eyelids many Graces sate,
Under the shadow of her even browes,
Working belgardes and amorous retrate;
And everie one her with a grace endowes,
And everie one with meekenesse to her bowes:
So glorious mirrhour of celestiall grace,
And soveraine moniment of mortall vowes,
How shall frayle pen descrive her heavenly face,
For feare, through want of skill, her beauty to disgrace?

So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire,
She seemd, when she presented was to sight;
And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
All in a silken Camus lilly whight,
Purfled upon with many a folded plight,
Which all above besprinckled was throughout
With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
Like twinckling starres; and all the skirt about
Was hemd with golden fringe.

Below her ham her weed did somewhat trayne,
And her streight legs most bravely were embayld
In gilden buskins of costly cordwayne,
All bard with golden bendes, which were entayld
With curious antickes, and full fayre aumayld:
Before, they fastned were under her knee
In a rich iewell, and therein entrayld
The ends of all the knots, that none might see
How they within their foldings close enwrapped bee.

Like two faire marble pillours they were seene,
Which doe the temple of the gods support,
Whom all the people decke with girlands greene,
And honour in their festivall resort;
Those same with stately grace and princely port
She taught to tread, when she herselfe would grace;
But with the woody nymphes when she did play,
Or when the flying libbard she did chace,
She could them nimbly move, and after fly apace.

And in her hand a sharpe bore-speare she held,
And at her backe a bow and quiver gay,
Stuft with steel-headed dartes wherewith she queld
The salvage beastes in her victorious play,
Knit with a golden bauldricke which forelay
Athwart her snowy brest, and did divide
Her daintie paps; which, like young fruit in May,
Now little gan to swell, and being tide
Through her thin weed their places only signifide.

Her yellow lockes, crisped like golden wyre,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the winde emongst them did inspyre,
They waved like a penon wyde dispred,
And low behinde her backe were scattered:
And, whether art it were or heedlesse hap,
As through the flouring forrest rash she fled,
In her rude heares sweet flowres themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap."[1]

'The daintie rose, the daughter of her morne,
More deare than life she tendered, whose flowre
The girlond of her honour did adorne:
Ne suffred she the middayes scorching powre,
Ne the sharp northerne wind thereon to showre;
But lapped up her silken leaves most chayre,
Whenso the froward skye began to lowre;
But, soone as calmed was the cristall ayre,
She did it fayre dispred, and let to florish fayre."[2]

He is on his knees before her, I repeat, as a child on Corpus Christi day, among flowers and perfumes, transported with admiration, so that he sees a heavenly light in her eyes, and angel's tints on her cheeks, even impressing into her service Christian angels and pagan graces to adorn and wait upon her; it is love which brings such visions before him:

'Sweet love, that doth his golden wings embay
In blessed nectar and pure pleasures well.'

Whence this perfect beauty, this modest and charming dawn, in which he assembles all the brightness, all the sweetness, all the virgin

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, ii. c. 3 st. 22–30. [2] *Ibid.* ii. c. 5. st. 51.

graces of the full morning? What mother begat her, what marvellous birth brought to light such a wonder of grace and purity? One day, in a fresh, solitary fountain, where the sunbeams shone, Chrysogone was bathing amid the roses and violets.

> 'It was upon a sommers shinie day,
> When Titan faire his beamës did display,
> In a fresh fountaine, far from all mens vew,
> She bath'd her brest the boyling heat t' allay;
> She bath'd with roses red and violets blew,
> And all the sweetest flowers that in the forrest grew.
> Till faint through yrkesome wearines adowne
> Upon the grassy ground herselfe she layd
> To sleepe, the whiles a gentle slombring swowne
> Upon her fell all naked bare displayd.'[1]

The beams played upon her body, and 'fructified' her. The months rolled on. Troubled and ashamed, she went into the 'wildernesse,' and sat down, 'every sence with sorrow sore oppresst.' Meanwhile Venus, searching for her boy Cupid, who had mutinied and fled from her, 'wandered in the world.' She had sought him in courts, cities, cottages, promising 'kisses sweet, and sweeter things, unto the man that of him tydings to her brings.'

> Shortly unto the wastefull woods she came,
> Whereas she found the goddesse (Diana) with her crew,
> After late chace of their embrewed game,
> Sitting beside a fountaine in a rew;
> Some of them washing with the liquid dew
> From off their dainty limbs the dusty sweat
> And soyle, which did deforme their lively hew;
> Others lay shaded from the scorching heat;
> The rest upon her person gave attendance great.
> She, having hong upon a bough on high
> Her bow and painted quiver, had unlaste
> Her silver buskins from her nimble thigh,
> And her lanck loynes ungirt, and brests unbraste,
> After her heat the breathing cold to taste;
> Her golden lockes, that late in tresses bright
> Embreaded were for hindring of her haste,
> Now loose about her shoulders hong undight,
> And were with sweet Ambrosia all besprinckled light.'[2]

Diana, surprised thus, repulses Venus, 'and gan to smile, in scorne of her vaine playnt,' swearing that if she should catch Cupid, she would clip his wanton wings. Then she took pity on the afflicted goddess, and set herself with her to look for the fugitive. They came to the 'shady covert' where Chrysogone, in her sleep, had given birth 'unwares' to two lovely girls, 'as faire as springing day.' Diana took one, and made her

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, iii. c. 6, st 6 and 7. [2] *Ibid.* st. 17 and 18.

the purest of all virgins. Venus carried off the other to the garden of Adonis, 'the first seminary of all things, that are borne to live and dye;' where Psyche, the bride of Love, disports herself; where Pleasure, their daughter, wantons with the Graces; where Adonis, 'lapped in flowres and pretious spycery,' 'liveth in eternal bliss,' and came back to life through the breath of immortal Love. She brought her up as her daughter, selected her to be the most faithful of loves, and after long trials, gave her hand to the good knight Sir Scudamore.

That is the kind of thing we meet with in the wondrous forest. Are you sick of it, and do you wish to leave it because it is wondrous? At every bend in the alley, at every change of the day, a stanza, a word, reveals a landscape or an apparition. It is morning, the white dawn gleams faintly through the trees; the bluish vapours roll like a veil at the horizon, and vanish in the smiling air; the springs tremble and murmur faintly amongst the mosses, and on high the poplar leaves begin to stir and flutter like the wings of butterflies. A knight alights from his horse, a valiant knight, who has unhorsed many a Saracen, and experienced many an adventure. He unlaces his helmet, and on a sudden you perceive the very cheeks of a young girl:

> 'Which doft, her golden lockes, that were upbound
> Still in a knot, unto her heeles downe traced,
> And like a silken veile in compasse round
> About her backe and all her bodie wound:
> Like as the shining skie in summers night,
> What time the dayes with scorching heat abound,
> Is creasted all with lines of firie light,
> That it prodigious seemes in common peoples sight.'[1]

It is Britomart, a virgin and a heroine, like Clorinda or Marfisa,[2] but how much more ideal! The genuine sentiment of nature, sincerity of fancy, ever-flowing fertility of inspiration, the German gravity, reanimate classical or chivalrous conceptions, which have the oldest and most trite appearance. The train of splendours and of scenery never ends. Desolate promontories, cleft with gaping chasms; thunder-stricken and blackened masses of rocks, against which the hoarse breakers dash; palaces sparkling with gold, wherein ladies, like angels, reclining carelessly on purple cushions, listen with sweet smiles to the harmony of music played by unseen hands; lofty silent walks, where avenues of oaks spread their motionless shadows over tufts of virgin violets, and turf which never mortal foot has trod;—to all these beauties of art and nature he adds the marvels of mythology, and describes them with as much of love and of full credence as a painter of

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, iv. c. 1, st. 13.

[2] Clorinda, the heroine of the infidel army in Tasso's epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*; Marfisa, an Indian queen, who figures in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and also in Boyardo's *Orlando Innamorato*.—TR.

the Renaissance or an ancient poet. Here approach on chariots of shell, Cymoent and her nymphs:

> 'A teme of dolphins raunged in aray
> Drew the smooth charett of sad Cymoënt;
> They were all taught by Triton to obay
> To the long raynes at her commaundëment:
> As swifte as swallowes on the waves they went,
> That their brode flaggy finnes no fome did reare,
> Ne bubling rowndell they behinde them sent;
> The rest, of other fishes drawen weare;
> Which with their finny oars the swelling sea did sheare.'[1]

Nothing, again, can be sweeter or calmer than the description of the palace of Morpheus:

> 'He, making speedy way through spersed ayre,
> And through the world of waters wide and deepe,
> To Morpheus house doth hastily repaire.
> Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,
> And low, where dawning day doth never peepe,
> His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
> Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe
> In silver deaw his ever-drouping hed,
> Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spred.
> And, more to lulle him in his slumber soft,
> A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,
> And ever-drizzling raine upon the loft,
> Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
> Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne.
> No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
> As still are wont t' annoy the walled towne,
> Might there be heard: but careless Quiet lyes,
> Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enimyes.'[2]

Observe also in a corner of this forest, a band of satyrs dancing under the green leaves. They come leaping like wanton kids, as gay as birds of joyous spring. The fair Hellenore, whom they have chosen for 'May-lady,' 'daunst lively' also, laughing, and 'with girlonds all bespredd.' The wood re-echoes the sound of their 'merry pypes.' 'Their horned feet the greene gras wore.' 'All day they daunced with great lustyhedd,' with sudden motions and suggestive ooks, while about them their flock feed on 'the brouzes' at their pleasure. In every book we see strange processions pass by, allegorical and picturesque shows, like those which were then displayed at the courts of princes; now a masquerade of Cupid, now of the Rivers, now of the Months, now of the Vices. Imagination was never more prodigal or inventive. Proud Lucifera advances on a chariot 'adorned all with gold and girlonds gay,' beaming like the dawn, surrounded by a crowd

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, iii. c. 4, st. 33. [2] *Ibid.* i. c. 1 st. 39 and 41.

of courtiers whom she dazzles with her glory and splendour: six unequall beasts" draw her along, and each of these is ridden by a Vice. One 'upon a slouthfull asse . . . in habit blacke . . . like to an holy monck,' sick for very idleness, lets his heavy head droop, and holds in his hand a breviary which he does not read; another, on 'a filthie swyne,' crawls by in his deformity, 'his belly . . . upblowne with luxury, and eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne; and like a crane his necke was long and fyne,' drest in vine-leaves, through which one can see his body eaten by ulcers, and vomiting along the road the wine and flesh with which he is glutted. Another, seated between 'two iron coffers,' 'upon a camell loaden all with gold,' is handling a heap of coin, with thread-bare coat, hollow cheeks, and feet stiff with gout; another 'upon a ravenous wolfe still did chaw between his cankred teeth a venemous tode, that all the poison ran about his chaw,' and his discoloured garment 'ypainted full of eies,' conceals a snake wound about his body. The last, covered with a torn and bloody robe, comes riding on a lion, brandishing about his head 'a burning brond,' his eyes sparkling, his face pale as ashes, grasping in his feverish hand the haft of his dagger. The strange and terrible procession passes on, led by the solemn harmony of the stanzas; and the grand music of reiterated rhymes sustains the imagination in this fantastic world, which, with its mingled horrors and splendours, has just been opened to its flight.

Yet all this is little. However much mythology and chivalry can supply, they do not suffice for the needs of this poetical fancy. Spenser's characteristic is the vastness and the overflow of picturesque invention. Like Rubens, he creates whole scenes, beyond the region of all traditions, to express distinct ideas. As with Rubens, his allegory swells its proportions beyond all rule, and withdraws fancy from all law, except in so far as it is necessary to harmonise forms and colours. For, if ordinary spirits receive from allegory a certain oppression, lofty imaginations receive wings which carry them aloft. Rescued by it from the common conditions of life, they can dare all things, beyond imitation, apart from probability, with no other guide but their inborn energy and their shadowy instincts. For three days Sir Guyon is led by the cursed spirit, the tempter Mammon, in the subterranean realm, across wonderful gardens, trees laden with golden fruits, glittering palaces, and a confusion of all worldly treasures. They have descended into the bowels of the earth, and pass through caverns, unknown abysses, silent depths. 'An ugly Feend . . . with monstrous stalke behind him stept,' without his knowledge, ready to devour him on the least show of covetousness. The brilliancy of the gold lights up the hideous figures, and the beaming metal shines with a beauty more seductive in the gloom of the infernal prison.

'That Houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,

From whose rough vaut the ragged breaches hong
Embost with massy gold of glorious guifte,
And with rich metall loaded every rifte,
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threatt;
And over them Arachne high did lifte
Her cunning web, and spred her subtile nett,
Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black than iett.

Both roofe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,
And hid in darknes, that none could behold
The hew thereof; for vew of cherefull day
Did never in that House itselfe display,
But a faint shadow of uncertein light;
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away;
Or as the moone, cloathed with clowdy night,
Does shew to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

In all that rowme was nothing to be seene
But huge great yron chests and coffers strong,
All bard with double bends, that none could weene
Them to enforce by violence or wrong;
On every side they placed were along.
But all the grownd with sculs was scattered
And dead mens bones, which round about were flong,
Whose lives, it seemed, whilome there were shed,
And their vile carcases now left unburied. . . .

Thence, forward he him ledd and shortly brought
Unto another rowme, whose dore forthright
To him did open as it had beene taught:
Therein an hundred raunges weren pight,
And hundred fournaces all burning bright;
By every fournace many Feends did byde,
Deformed creatures, horrible in sight;
And every Feend his busie paines applyde
To melt the golden metall, ready to be tryde.

One with great bellowes gathered filling ayre,
And with forst wind the fewell did inflame;
Another did the dying bronds repayre
With yron tongs, and sprinckled ofte the same
With liquid waves, fiers Vulcans rage to tame,
Who, maystring them, renewd his former heat:
Some scumd the drosse that from the metall came;
Some stird the molten owre with ladles great:
And every one did swincke, and every one did sweat.

He brought him, through a darksom narrow strayt,
To a broad gate all built of beaten gold:
The gate was open; but therein did wayt
A sturdie Villein, stryding stiffe and bold,

As if the Highest God defy he would:
In his right hand an yron club he held,
But he himselfe was all of golden mould,
Yet had both life and sence, and well could weld
That cursed weapon, when his cruell foes he queld . . .

He brought him in. The rowme was large and wyde,
As it some gyeld or solemne temple weare;
Many great golden pillours did upbeare
The massy roofe, and riches huge sustayne;
And every pillour decked was full deare
With crownes, and diademes, and titles vaine,
Which mortall princes wore whiles they on earth did rayne.

A route of people there assembled were,
Of every sort and nation under skye,
Which with great uprore preaced to draw nere
To th' upper part, where was advaunced hye
A stately siege of soveraine maiestye;
And thereon satt a Woman gorgeous gay,
And richly cladd in robes of royaltye,
That never earthly prince in such aray
His glory did enhaunce, and pompous pryde display . . .

There, as in glistring glory she did sitt,
She held a great gold chaine ylincked well,
Whose upper end to highest heven was knitt,
And lower part did reach to lowest hell.'[1]

No artist's dream matches these visions: the glowing of the furnace under the vaults of the cavern, the lights flickering over the crowded figures, the throne, and the strange glitter of the gold shining in every direction through the darkness. The allegory assumes gigantic proportions. When the object is to show Temperance at issue with temptations, Spenser deems it necessary to mass all the temptations together. He is treating of a general virtue; and as such a virtue is capable of every sort of resistance, he requires from it every sort of resistance at one time;—after the test of gold, that of pleasure. Thus the grandest and the most exquisite spectacles follow and are contrasted with each other supernaturally; the graceful and the terrible side by side,—the happy gardens side by side with the cursed subterranean cavern.

'No gate, but like one, being goodly dight
With bowes and braunches, which did broad dilate
Their clasping armes in wanton wreathings intricate:

So fashioned a porch with rare device,
Archt over head with an embracing vine
Whose bounches hanging downe seemd to entice
All passers-by to taste their lushious wine,

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, ii. c. 7, st. 28–46.

And did themselves into their hands incline,
As freely offering to be gathered;
Some deepe empurpled as the hyacine,
Some as the rubine laughing sweetely red,
Some like faire emeraudes, not yet well ripened. . . .

And in the midst of all a fountaine stood,
Of richest substance that on earth might bee,
So pure and shiny that the silver flood
Through every channell running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious ymageree
Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
Of which some seemd with lively iollitee
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
Whylest others did themselves embay in liquid ioyes.

And over all of purest gold was spred
A trayle of yvie in his native hew;
For the rich metall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well avis'd it vew,
Would surely deeme it to bee yvie trew:
Low his lascivious armes adown did creepe,
That themselves dipping in the silver dew
Their fleecy flowres they fearfully did steepe,
Which drops of christall seemd for wantones to weep.

Infinit streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
That like a little lake it seemd to bee;
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
That through the waves one might the bottom see,
All pav'd beneath with jaspar shining bright,
That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle upright. . . .

The ioyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th' angelicall soft trembling voyces made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmure of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all. . . .

Upon a bed of roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin;
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Arachne cannot spin;
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to ready spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n' ote therewith be fild;
And yet, through languour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then nectar, forth distild,
That like pure orient perles adowne it trild;
And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light,
Which, sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright.'[1]

Is not this a fairy land? We find here finished pictures, genuine and complete, composed with a painter's feeling, with choice of tints and lines; our eyes are delighted by it. This reclining Acrasia has the pose of a goddess, or of one of Titian's courtesans. An Italian artist might copy these gardens, flowing waters, sculptured loves, wreaths of creeping ivy thick with glossy leaves and fleecy flowers. Just before, in the infernal depths, the lights, with their long streaming rays, were fine, half-smothered by the darkness; the lofty throne in the vast hall, between the pillars, in the midst of a swarming multitude, connected all the forms around it by centring all regards. The poet, here and throughout, is a colourist and an architect. However fantastic his world may be, it is not factitious; if it is not, it might have been; indeed, it should have been; it is the fault of circumstances if they do not dispose themselves so as to bring this to pass; taken by itself, it possesses that internal harmony by which a real thing, even a still higher harmony, comes into existence, inasmuch as, amid the differences of real things, it is altogether, and in its least detail, constructed with a view to beauty. Art is matured: this is the great characteristic of the age, which distinguishes this poem from all similar tales heaped up by the middle-age. Incoherent, mutilated, they lay like rubbish, or rough-hewn stones, which the weak hands of the trouvères could not build into a monument. At last the poets and artists are here, and with them the conception of beauty, to wit, the idea of the general effect. They understand proportions, relations, contrasts; they compose. In their hands the misty vague sketch becomes defined, complete, separate; it assumes colour—is made a picture. Every object thus conceived and imaged acquires a definite existence as soon as it acquires a true form; centuries after, it will be acknowledged and admired, and men will be touched by it; and more, they will be touched by its author; for, besides the object which he paints, the poet paints himself. His ruling idea is stamped upon the work which it produces and controls. Spenser is superior to his subject, comprehends it fully, frames it with a view to the end, in order to impress upon it the proper mark of his soul and his genius. Each story is modified with respect to another, and all with respect to a certain effect

[1] *The Faërie Queene*, ii c. 12. st. 53–78.

which is being worked out. Thus a beauty issues from this harmony, —the beauty in the poet's heart,—which his whole work strives to express; a noble and yet a laughing beauty, made up of moral elevation and sensuous seductions, English in sentiment, Italian in externals, chivalric in subject, modern in its perfection, representing a unique and admirable epoch, the appearance of paganism in a Christian race, and the worship of form by an imagination of the North.

3. Prose.

I.

Such an epoch can scarcely last, and the poetic vitality expends itself in a blossom of prose, so that its expansion leads to its decline. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the enfeeblement of manners and genius grows apparent. Enthusiasm and respect decline. The minions and sycophants of the court intrigue and pilfer, amid pedantry, puerility, and show. The court plunders, and the nation murmurs. The Commons begin to show a stern front, and the king, scolding them like a schoolmaster, bends before them like a little boy. This pitiable monarch (James I.) suffers himself to be bullied by his favourites, writes to them like a gossip, calls himself a Solomon, airs his literary vanity, and in granting an audience to a courtier, holds up to him his own reputation as a savant, and expects to be answered in the same strain. The dignity of the government is weakened, and the people's loyalty is cooled. Royalty declines, and revolution is fostered. At the same time, the noble chivalric paganism degenerates into a base and coarse sensuality. The king, we are told, on one occasion, had got so drunk with his royal brother Christian of Denmark, that they both had to be carried to bed. Sir John Harrington says:

'The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication. . . . The Lady who did play the Queen's part (in the Masque of the Queen of Sheba) did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties; but, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, tho I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean. His Majesty then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity: Faith . . . left the court in a staggering condition. . . . They were both sick and spewing in the lower hall. Next came Victory, who . . . by a strange medley of versification

. . . and after much lamentable utterance, was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the anti-chamber. As for Peace, she most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming. I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety in our Queen's days.'[1]

Observe that these tipsy women were great ladies. The reason is, that the grand ideas which introduce an epoch, end, in their exhaustion, by preserving nothing but their vices; the proud sentiment of natural life becomes a vulgar appeal to the senses. An entrance, an arch of triumph under James I., often represented obscenities; and later, when the sensual instincts, exaggerated by Puritan tyranny, begin to raise their heads once more, we shall find under the Restoration, excess revelling in its debauchery, and triumphing in its shame.

Meanwhile the literature undergoes a change; the powerful breeze which had guided it, and which, amidst singularity, refinements, exaggerations, had made it great, slackened and diminished. With Carew, Suckling, and Herrick, prettiness takes the place of the beautiful. That which strikes them is no longer the general features of things; that which they try to express is no longer the inner character of things. They no longer possess that liberal conception, that instinctive penetration, by which man sympathised with objects, and grew capable of creating them anew. They no longer boast of that overflow of emotions, that excess of ideas and images, which compelled a man to relieve himself by words, to act externally, to represent freely and boldly the interior drama which made his whole body and heart tremble. They are rather wits of the court, cavaliers of fashion, who wish to try their hand at imagination and style. In their hands love becomes gallantry; they write songs, fugitive pieces, compliments to the ladies. Do their hearts still prick them? They turn eloquent phrases in order to be applauded, and flattering exaggerations in order to please. The divine faces, the serious or profound looks, the virgin or impassioned expressions which burst forth at every step in the early poets, have disappeared; here we see nothing but agreeable countenances, painted in agreeable verses. Blackguardism is not far off; we meet with it as early as in Suckling, and crudity to boot, and prosaic epicurism; their sentiment is expressed before long, in such a phrase as: 'Let us amuse ourselves, and a fig for the rest.' The only objects they can paint, at last, are little graceful things, a kiss, a May-day festivity, a dewy primrose, a marriage morning, a bee.[2] Herrick and Suckling especially produce little exquisite poems, delicate, ever laughing or smiling like those attributed to Anacreon,

[1] *Nugæ Antiquæ*, i. 349 *et passim*.

[2] 'Some asked me where the Rubies grew,
And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.

or those which abound in the *Anthology*. In fact, here, as at the time alluded to, we are at the decline of paganism; energy departs, the reign of the agreeable begins. People do not relinquish the worship of beauty and pleasure, but dally with them. They deck and fit them to their taste; they cease to subdue and bend men, who sport and amuse themselves with them. It is the last beam of a setting sun; the genuine poetic sentiment dies out with Sedley, Waller, and the rhymesters of the Restoration; they write prose in verse; their heart is on a level with their style, and with an exact language we find the commencement of a new age and a new art.

Side by side with prettiness comes affectation; it is the second mark of the decadence. Instead of writing to say things, they write to say them well; they outbid their neighbours, and strain every mode of speech: they push art over on the side to which it had a leaning; and as in this age it had a leaning towards vehemence and imagination,

Some ask'd how Pearls did grow, and where;
Then spake I to my girle,
To part her lips, and shew me there
The quarelets of Pearl.
One ask'd me where the roses grew;
I bade him not go seek;
But forthwith bade my Julia show
A bud in either cheek.'

HERRICK'S *Hesperides*, ed. Walford 1859; *The Rock of Rubies*, p. 32.

'About the sweet bag of a bee,
Two Cupids fell at odds;
And whose the pretty prize shu'd be,
They vow'd to ask the Gods.
Which Venus hearing, thither came,
And for their boldness stript them;
And taking thence from each his flame,
With rods of mirtle whipt them.
Which done, to still their wanton cries,
When quite grown sh'ad seen them,
She kist and wip'd their dove-like eyes,
And gave the bag between them.'

HERRICK, *Ibid.*; *The Bag of the Bee* p. 41

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee, why so pale?
Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prithee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
Saying nothing do't?
Prithee, why so mute?

they pile up their emphasis and colouring. A jargon always springs out of a style. In all arts, the first masters, the inventors, discover the idea, steep themselves in it, and leave it to effect its outward form. Then come the second class, the imitators, who sedulously repeat this form, and alter it by exaggeration. Some nevertheless have talent, as Quarles, Herbert, Babington, Donne in particular, a pungent satirist, of terrible crudeness,[1] a powerful poet, of a precise and intense imagination, who still preserves something of the energy and thrill of the original inspiration.[2] But he deliberately abuses all these gifts, and

Quit, quit for shame: this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her.
The devil take her!'

Sir JOHN SUCKLING'S *Works*, ed. A. Suckling, 1836, p. 70.

As when a lady, walking Flora's bower,
Picks here a pink, and there a gilly-flower,
Now plucks a violet from her purple bed,
And then a primrose, the year's maidenhead.
There nips the brier, here's the lover's pansy,
Shifting her dainty pleasures with her fancy;
This on her arms, and that she lists to wear
Upon the borders of her curious hair;
At length a rose-bud (passing all the rest)
She plucks and bosoms in her lily breast.'

QUARLES, Chalmers' *Cyclopædia of Engl. Lit.* i. 140.

[1] See in particular, his satire against the courtiers. The following is against imitators:

'But he is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Other's wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things outspue,
As his owne things; and they are his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meat was mine, th' excrement is his owne.'

DONNE'S *Satires*, 1639. *Satire* ii p 128.

[2] 'When I behold a stream, which from the spring
Doth with doubtful melodious murmuring,
Or in a speechless slumber calmly ride
Her wedded channel's bosom, and there chide
And bend her brows, and swell, if any bough
Does but stoop down to kiss her utmost brow:
Yet if her often gnawing kisses win
The traitorous banks to gape and let her in,
She rusheth violently and doth divorce
Her from her native and her long-kept course.
And roares, and braves it, and in gallant scorn
In flatt'ring eddies promising return,
She flouts her channel, which thenceforth is dry
Then say I: That is she, and this am I.'

succeeds with great difficulty in concocting a piece of nonsense. For instance, the impassioned poets had said to their mistress, that if they lost her, they should hate all other women. Donne, in order to eclipse them, says:

'O do not die, for I shall hate
All women so, when thou art gone,
That thee I shall not celebrate
When I remember thou wast one.'[1]

Twenty times while reading him we rub our brow, and ask with astonishment, how a man could so have tormented and contorted himself, strained his style, refined on his refinement, hit upon such absurd comparisons? But this was the spirit of the age; they made an effort to be ingeniously absurd. A flea had bitten Donne and his mistress. He says:

'This flea is you and I, and this
Our mariage bed and mariage temple is.
Though Parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloyster'd in these living walls of Jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that selfe-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.'[2]

The Marquis de Mascarille[3] never found anything to equal this. Would you have believed a writer could invent such absurdities? She and he made but one, for both are but one with the flea, and so one could not be killed without the other. Observe that the wise Malherbe wrote very similar enormities, in the *Tears of St. Peter*, and that the sonneteers of Italy and Spain reach simultaneously the same height of folly, and you will agree that throughout Europe at that time they were at the close of a poetical epoch.

On this boundary line of a closing and a dawning literature a poet appeared, one of the most fanciful and illustrious of his time, Abraham Cowley,[4] a precocious child, a reader and a versifier like Pope, having known passions less than books, busied himself less about things than about words. Literary exhaustion has seldom been more manifest. He possesses all the capacity to say whatever pleases him, but he has just nothing to say. The substance has vanished, leaving in its place a hollow shadow. In vain he tries the epic, the Pindaric strophe, all kinds of stanzas, odes, little lines, long lines; in vain he calls to his assistance botanical and philosophical similes, all the erudition of the university, all the relics of antiquity, all the ideas of new science: we yawn as we read him. Except in a few descriptive verses, two or three

[1] *Poems*, 1639: *A Feaver*, p. 15. [2] *Ibid.*: *The Flea*, p. 1.

[3] A valet in Molières *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, who apes and exaggerates his master's manners and style, and pretends to be a marquess. He also appears in *L'Etourdi* and *Le dépit Amoureux*, by the same author.—Tr.

[4] 1608–1667. I refer to the eleventh edition of 1710.

graceful tendernesses,[1] he feels nothing, he speaks only; he is a poet of the brain. His collection of amorous pieces is but a vehicle for a scientific test, and serves to show that he has read the authors, that he knows his geography, that he is well versed in anatomy, that he has a dash of medicine and astronomy, that he has at his service references and allusions enough to break the head of his readers. He will speak in this wise:

> 'Beauty, thou active—passive Ill!
> Which dy'st thyself as fast as thou dost kill!'

or will remark that his mistress is to blame for spending three hours every morning at her toilet, because

> 'They make that Beauty Tyranny,
> That's else a Civil-government.'

After reading two hundred pages, you feel disposed to box his ears. You have to think, by way of consolation, that every age must draw to a close, that this one could not do so otherwise, that the old glow of enthusiasm, the sudden flood of rapture, images, capricious and audacious fancies, which once rolled through the mind of men, arrested now and cooled down, could only exhibit dross, a curdling scum, a multitude of brilliant and hurtful points. You say to yourself that, after all, Cowley had perhaps talent; you find that he had in fact one, a new talent, unknown to the old masters, the sign of a new culture, which needs other manners, and announces a new society. Cowley had these manners, and belongs to this society. He was a well-governed, reasonable, instructed, polished, well-trained man, who, after twelve years of service and writing in France, under Queen Henrietta, retires at last wisely into the country, where he studies natural history, and prepares a treatise on religion, philosophising on men and life, fertile in general reflections and ideas, a moralist, bidding his executor 'to let nothing stand in his writings which might seem the least in the world to be an offence against religion or good manners.' Such dispositions and such a life produce and indicate less a poet, that is, a seer, a creator, than a literary man, I mean a man who can think and speak, and who therefore ought to have read much, learnt much, written much, ought to possess a calm and clear mind, to be accustomed to polished society, sustained conversation, a sort of raillery. In fact, Cowley is an author by profession, the oldest of those who in England deserve the name. His prose is as easy and sensible as his poetry is contorted and unreasonable. A polished man, writing for polished men, pretty much as he would speak to them in a drawing-room,—this I take to be the idea which they had of a good author in the seventeenth century. It is the idea which Cowley's Essays leave of his character; it is the kind of talent which the writers of the coming age take for their model; and

[1] *The Spring* (*The Mistress*, i. 72).

he is the first of that grave and amiable group which, continued in Temple, reaches so far as to include Addison.

II.

Having reached this point, the Renaissance seemed to have attained its limit, and, like a drooping and faded flower, to be ready to leave its place for a new bud which began to rise from the ruins. At all events, a living and unexpected shoot sprang from the old declining stock. At the moment when art languished, science shot forth; the whole labour of the age ended in this. The fruits are not unlike; on the contrary, they come from the same sap, and by the diversity of the shape only manifest two distinct periods of the inner growth which has produced them. Every art ends in a science, and every poetry in a philosophy. For science and philosophy do but translate in precise formulas the original conception which art and poetry render sensible by imaginary figures: when once the idea of an epoch is manifested in verse by ideal creations, it naturally comes to be expressed in prose by positive arguments. That which had struck men on escaping from ecclesiastical oppression and monkish asceticism was the pagan idea of a life true to nature, and freely developed. They had found nature buried behind scholasticism, and they had expressed it in poems and paintings; in Italy by superb healthy corporeality, in England by vehement and unconventional spirituality, with such divination of its laws, instincts, and forms, that one might extract from their theatre and their pictures a complete theory both of soul and body. When enthusiasm is past, curiosity begins. The sentiment of beauty gives way to the sentiment of truth. The theory embraced in works of imagination is unfolded. The gaze continues fixed on nature, not to admire now, but to understand. From painting we pass to anatomy, from the drama to moral philosophy, from grand poetical divinations to great scientific views; the second continue the first, and the same spirit shows in both; for what art had represented, and science proceeds to observe, are living things, with their complex and complete structure, set in motion by their internal forces, with no supernatural intervention. Artists and savants, all set out, with no misgiving, from the master conception, to wit, that nature subsists of herself, that every existence has in its own womb the source of its action, that the causes of events are the innate laws of things; an all-powerful idea, from which was to issue the modern civilisation, and which, at the time I write of, produced in England and Italy, as before in Greece, genuine sciences, side by side with a complete art: after da Vinci and Michael Angelo, the school of anatomists, mathematicians, naturalists, ending with Galileo; after Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Shakspeare, the school of thinkers who surround Bacon and lead up to Harvey.

We have not far to look for this school. In the interregnum of Christianity the dominating bent of mind belongs to it. It was paganism

which reigned in Elizabeth's court, not only in letters, but in doctrine,—a paganism of the north, always serious, generally sombre, but which rested, like that of the south, on natural forces. From some, all Christianity was effaced; many proceed to atheism from the excess of revulsion and debauchery, like Marlowe and Greene. With others, like Shakspeare, the idea of God scarcely makes its appearance; they see in our poor short human life only a dream, and beyond it the long sad sleep: for them, death is the goal of life; at most a dark gulf, into which man plunges, uncertain of the issue. If they carry their gaze beyond, they perceive,[1] not the soul welcomed into a purer world, but the corpse abandoned to the damp earth, or the ghost hovering about the churchyard. They speak like sceptics or superstitious men, never as genuine believers. Their heroes have human, not religious virtues; against crime they rely on honour and the love for the beautiful, not on piety and the fear of God. If others, few and far, like Sidney and Spenser, catch a glimpse of this god, it is as a vague ideal light, a sublime Platonic phantom, which has no resemblance to a personal God, a strict inquisitor of the slightest motions of the heart. He appears at the summit of things, like the splendid crown of the world, but He does not weigh upon human life; He leaves it intact and free, only turning it towards the beautiful. They do not know as yet the sort of narrow prison in which official cant and respectable creeds were, later on, to confine action and intelligence. Even the believers, sincere Christians like Bacon and Browne, discard all oppressive sternness, reduce Christianity to a sort of moral poetry, and allow naturalism to subsist beneath religion. In such a broad and open channel, speculation could spread its wings. With Lord Herbert appeared a systematic deism; with Milton and Algernon Sidney, a philosophical religion; Clarendon went so far as to compare Lord Falkland's gardens to the groves of Academe. Against the rigorism of the Puritans, Chillingworth, Hales, Hooker, the greatest doctors of the English Church, give a large place to natural reason,—so large, that never, even to this day, has it made such an advance.

An astonishing irruption of facts—the discovery of America, the revival of antiquity, the restoration of philology, the invention of the arts, the development of industries, the march of human curiosity over the whole of the past and the whole of the globe—came to furnish subject-matter, and prose began its reign. Sidney, Wilson, Ascham, and Puttenham explored the rules of style; Hackluyt and Purchas compiled the cyclopædia of travel and the description of every land; Holinshed, Speed, Raleigh, Stowe, Knolles, Daniel, Thomas More, Lord Herbert, founded history; Camden, Spelman, Cotton, Usher, and Selden inaugurate scholarship; a legion of patient workers, of obscure

[1] See in Shakspeare, *The Tempest, Measure for Measure, Hamlet;* in Beaumont and Fletcher, *Thierry and Theodoret*, Act iv.; Webster, *passim*

collectors, of literary pioneers, amassed, arranged, and sifted the documents which Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Bodley stored up in their libraries; whilst utopists, moralists, painters of manners—Thomas More, Joseph Hall, John Earle, Owen Feltham, Burton—described and passed judgment on the modes of life, continued with Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, and Isaac Walton up to the middle of the next century, and increase the number of controversialists and politicians who, with Hooker, Taylor, Chillingworth, Algernon Sidney, Harrington, study religion, society, church and state. A copious and confused fermentation, from which abundance of thoughts proceeded, but few notable books. Noble prose, such as was heard at the court of Louis XIV., in Pollio, in the schools at Athens, such as rhetorical and sociable nations know how to produce, was altogether lacking. These men had not the spirit of analysis, the art of following step by step the natural order of ideas, nor the spirit of conversation, the talent never to weary or shock others. Their imagination is too little regulated, and their manners too little polished. They who had mixed most in the world, even Sidney, speak roughly what they think, and as they think it. Instead of glossing, they exaggerate. They blurt out all, and withhold nothing. When they do not employ excessive compliments, they take to coarse pleasantries. They overlook measured charm, refined raillery, delicate flattery. They rejoice in gross puns, dirty allusions They mistake paradoxical enigmas and grotesque images for wit. Great lords and ladies, they talk like ill-bred persons, lovers of buffoonery, of shows and bear-fights. With some, as Overbury or Sir Thomas Browne, poetry trenches so much upon prose, that it covers its narrative with images, and hides ideas under its pictures. They load their style with flowery comparisons, which produce one another as they go along, and mount one above another, so that sense disappears, and ornament only is visible. In fine, they are generally pedants, still stiff with the rust of the school; they divide and subdivide, propound theses, definitions; they argue solidly and heavily, and quote their authors in Latin, and even in Greek; they square out their massive periods, and learnedly knock their adversaries down, and their readers too, by the very rebound. They are never on the prose-level, but always above or below—above by their poetic genius, below by the weight of their education and the barbarism of their manners. But they think seriously and for themselves; they are deliberate; they are convinced and touched by what they say. Even in the compiler we find a force and loyalty of spirit, which give confidence and cause pleasure. Their writings are like the powerful and heavy engravings of their contemporaries, the maps of Hofnagel for instance, so harsh and so instructive; their conception is sharp and clear; they have the gift of perceiving every object, not under a general aspect, like the classical writers, but specially and individually. It is not man in the abstract, the citizen as he is everywhere, the countryman as such, that they

represent, but James or Thomas, Smith or Brown, of such a parish, from such an office, with such and such attitude or dress, distinct from all others; in short, they see, not the idea, but the individual. Imagine the disturbance that such a disposition produces in a man's head, how the regular order of things becomes deranged by it; how every object, with the infinite medley of its forms, properties, appendages, will thenceforth fasten itself by a hundred points of contact unforeseen to another object, and bring before the mind a series or a family; what boldness language will derive from it; what familar, picturesque, absurd words will break forth in succession; how the dash, the impromptu, the originality and inequality of invention, will stand out. Figure, at the same time, what a hold this form of mind has on objects, how many facts it condenses in one conception; what a mass of personal judgments, foreign authorities, suppositions, guesses, imaginations, it spreads over every subject; with what haphazard and creative fecundity it engenders both truth and conjecture. It is an extraordinary chaos of thoughts and forms, often abortive, still more often barbarous, sometimes grand. But from this superfluity something lasting and great is produced, namely science, and we have only to examine more closely into one or two of these works to see the new creation emerge from the blocks and the debris.

III.

Two writers above all display this state of mind. The first, Robert Burton, an ecclesiastic and university recluse, who passed his life in libraries, and dabbled in all the sciences, as learned as Rabelais, of an inexhaustible and overflowing memory; unequal, moreover, gifted with enthusiasm, and spasmodically gay, but as a rule sad and morose, to the extent of confessing in his epitaph that melancholy made up his life and his death; in the first place original, enamoured of his own intelligence, and one of the earliest models of that singular English mood which, withdrawing man within himself, develops in him, at one time imagination, at another scrupulousness, at another oddity, and makes of him, according to circumstances, a poet, an eccentric, a humorist, a madman, or a puritan. He read on for thirty years, put an encyclopædia into his head, and now, to amuse and relieve himself, takes a folio of blank paper. Twenty lines of a poet, a dozen lines of a treatise on agriculture, a folio column of heraldry, the patience, the record of the fever fits of hypochondria, the history of the particle *que*, a scrap of metaphysics,—this is what passes through his brain in a quarter of an hour: it is a carnival of ideas and phrases, Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, philosophical, geometrical, medical, poetical, astrological, musical, pedagogic, heaped one on the other; an enormous medley, a prodigious mass of jumbled quotations, jostling thoughts with the vivacity and the transport of a feast of unreason.[1]

[1] See for this feast Walter Scott's *Abbot*, chs. xiv. and xv.—Tr.

'This roving humour (though not with like success) I have ever had, and, like a raging spaniel that barks at every bird he sees, leaving his game, I have followed all, saving that which I should, and may justly complain, and truly, *qui ubique est, nusquam est*, which Gesner did in modesty: that I have read many books, but to little purpose, for want of good method; I have confusedly tumbled over divers authors in our libraries with small profit, for want of art, order, memory, judgment. I never travelled but in map or card, in which my unconfined thoughts have freely expatiated, as having ever been especially delighted with the study of cosmography. Saturn was lord of my geniture, culminating, etc., and Mars principal significator of manners, in partile conjunction with mine ascendant; both fortunate in their houses, etc. I am not poor, I am not rich; *nihil est, nihil deest;* I have little, I want nothing: all my treasure is in Minerva's tower. Greater preferment as I could never get, so am I not in debt for it. I have a competency (*laus Deo*) from my noble and munificent patrons. Though I live still a collegiat student, as Democritus in his garden, and lead a monastique life, *ipse mihi theatrum*, sequestred from those tumults and troubles of the world, *et tanquam in speculâ positus* (as he said), in some high place above you all, like *Stoïcus sapiens, omnia sæcula præterita præsentiaque videns, uno velut intuitu*, I hear and see what is done abroad, how others run, ride, turmoil, and macerate themselves in court and countrey. Far from these wrangling lawsuits, *aulæ vanitatem, fori ambitionem, videre mecum soleo:* I laugh at all, only secure, lest my suit go amiss, my ships perish, corn and cattle miscarry, trade decay; I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for; a mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and how they act their parts, which methinks are diversely presented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene. I hear new news every day: and those ordinary rumours of war plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets; spectrums, prodigies, apparitions; of towns taken, cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, etc., daily musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwracks, piracies, and sea-fights, peace, leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarms—a vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, laws, proclamations, complaints, grievances,—are daily brought to our ears: new books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, etc. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubiles, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, playes: then again, as in a new shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villanies, in all kinds, funerals, burials, death of princes, new discoveries, expeditions; now comical, then tragical matters. To-day we hear of new lords and officers created, to-morrow of some great men deposed, and then again of fresh honours conferred: one is let loose, another imprisoned: one purchaseth, another breaketh: he thrives, his neighbour turns bankrupt; now plenty, then again dearth and famine; one runs, another rides, wrangles, laughs, weeps, etc. Thus I daily hear, and such like, both private and publick news.'[1]

'For what a world of books offers itself, in all subjects, arts, and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the reader? In arithmetick, geometry, perspective, optick, astronomy, architecture, *sculptura*, *pictura*, of which so many and such elaborate treatises are of late written: in mechanicks and their mysteries, military matters, navigation, riding of horses, fencing, swimming, gardening,

[1] *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 12th ed. 1821, 2 vols.; Democritus to the Reader i. 4

planting, great tomes of husbandry, cookery, faulconry, hunting, fishing, fowling, etc., with exquisite pictures of all sports, games, and what not. In musick, metaphysicks, natural and moral philosophy, philologie, in policy, heraldry, genealogy, chronology, etc., they afford great tomes, or those studies of antiquity, etc., *et quid subtilius arithmeticis inventionibus? quid jucundius musicis rationibus? quid divinius astronomicis? quid rectius geometricis demonstrationibus?* What so sure, what so pleasant? He that shall but see the geometrical tower of Garezenda at Bologne in Italy, the steeple and clock at Strasborough, will admire the effects of art, or that engine of Archimedes to remove the earth itself, if he had but a place to fasten his instrument. *Archimedis cochlea*, and rare devises to corrivate waters, musick instruments, and trisyllable echoes again, again, and again repeated, with miriades of such. What vast tomes are extant in law, physick, and divinity, for profit, pleasure, practice, speculation, in verse or prose, etc.! Their names alone are the subject of whole volumes: we have thousands of authors of all sorts, many great libraries, full well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates, and he is a very block that is affected with none of them. Some take an infinite delight to study the very languages wherein these books are written—Hebrew, Greek, Syriack, Chalde, Arabick, etc. Methinks it would please any man to look upon a geographical map (*suavi animum delectatione allicere, ob incredibilem rerum varietatem et jucunditatem, et ad pleniorem sui cognitionem excitare*), chorographical, topographical delineations; to behold, as it were, all the remote provinces, towns, cities of the world, and never to go forth of the limits of his study; to measure, by the scale and compasse, their extent, distance, examine their site. Charles the Great (as Platina writes) had three faire silver tables, in one of which superficies was a large map of Constantinople, in the second Rome neatly engraved, in the third an exquisite description of the whole world; and much delight he took in them. What greater pleasure can there now be, than to view those elaborate maps of Ortelius, Mercator, Hondius, etc.? to peruse those books of cities put out by Braunus and Hogenbergius? to read those exquisite descriptions of Maginus, Munster, Herrera, Laet, Merula, Boterus, Leander Albertus, Camden, Leo Afer, Adricomius, Nic. Gerbelius, etc.? those famous expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Americus Vespucius, Marcus Polus the Venetian, Lod. Virtomannus, Aloysius Cadamustus, etc.? those accurate diaries of Portugals, Hollanders, of Bartison, Oliver a Nort, etc., Hacluit's Voyages, Pet. Martyr's Decades, Benzo, Lerius, Linschoten's relations, those Hodœporicons of Jod. a Meggea, Brocarde the Monke, Bredenbachius, Jo. Dublinius, Sands, etc., to Jerusalem, Egypt, and other remote places of the world? those pleasant itineraries of Paulus Hentzerus, Jodocus Sincerus, Dux Polonus, etc.? to read Bellonius observations, P. Gillius his survayes; those parts of America, set out, and curiously cut in pictures, by Fratres a Bry? To see a well cut herbal, hearbs, trees, flowers, plants, all vegetals, expressed in their proper colours to the life, as that of Matthiolus upon Dioscorides, Delacampius, Lobel, Bauhinus, and that last volumincus and mighty herbal of Besler of Noremberge; wherein almost every plant is to his own bignesse. To see birds, beasts, and fishes of the sea, spiders, gnats, serpents, flies, etc., all creatures set out by the same art, and truly expressed in lively colours, with an exact description of their natures, vertues, qualities, etc., as hath been accurately performed by Ælian, Gesner, Ulysses Aldrovandus, Bellonius, Rondoletius, Hippolytus Salvianus, etc.'[1]

He is never-ending; words, phrases, overflow, are heaped up, re-

[1] *Anatomy of Melancholy*, i. part 2, sec. 2, Mem. 4, p. 420 *et passim*.

peated, and flow on, carrying the reader along, deafened, wearied, half-drowned, unable to touch ground in the deluge. Burton is inexhaustible. There are no ideas which he does not iterate under fifty forms: when he has expended his own, he pours out upon us other men's—the classics, the rarest authors, known only by savants—authors rarer still, known only to the learned; he borrows from all. Underneath these deep caverns of erudition and science, there is one blacker and more unknown than all the others, filled with forgotten authors, with crack-jaw names, Besler of Nuremberg, Adricomius, Linschoten, Brocarde, Bredenbachius. Amidst all these antediluvian monsters, bristling with Latin terminations, he is at his ease; he sports with them, laughs, skips from one to the other, drives them all at once. He is like old Proteus, the bold runner, who in one hour, with his team of hippopotami, makes the circuit of the ocean.

What subject does he take? Melancholy, his individual mood, and he takes it like a schoolman. None of St. Thomas' treatises is more regularly constructed than his. This torrent of erudition is distributed in geometrically planned channels, turning off at right angles without deviating by a line. At the head of every part you will find a synoptical and analytical table, with hyphens, brackets, each division begetting its subdivisions, each subdivision its sections, each section its subsections: of the malady in general, of melancholy in particular, of its nature, its seat, its varieties, causes, symptoms, its prognosis; of its cure by permissible means, by forbidden means, by dietetic means, by pharmaceutical means. After the scholastic process, he descends from the general to the particular, and disposes each emotion and idea in its labelled case. In this framework, supplied by the middle-age, he heaps up the whole, like a man of the Renaissance,—the literary description of passions and the medical description of mental alienation, details of the hospital with a satire on human follies, physiological treatises side by side with personal confidences, the recipes of the apothecary with moral counsels, remarks on love with the history of evacuations. The discrimination of ideas has not yet been effected; doctor and poet, man of letters and savant, he is all at once; for want of dams, ideas pour like different liquids into the same vat, with strange spluttering and bubbling, with an unsavoury smell and odd effect. But the vat is full, and from this admixture are produced potent compounds which no preceding age had known.

IV.

For in this mixture there is an effectual leaven, the poetic sentiment, which stirs up and animates the vast erudition, which will not be confined to dry catalogues; which, interpreting every fact, every object, disentangles or divines a mysterious soul within it, and agitates the whole spirit of man, by representing to him the restless world within and without him as a grand enigma. Let us conceive a kindred

spirit to Shakspeare's, a scholar and an observer instead of an actor and a poet, who in place of creating is occupied in comprehending, but who, like Shakspeare, applies himself to living things, penetrates their internal structure, puts himself in communication with their actual laws, imprints in himself fervently and scrupulously the smallest details of their figure; who at the same time extends his penetrating surmises beyond the region of observation, discerns behind visible phænomena a world obscure yet sublime, and trembles with a kind of veneration before the vast, indistinct, but populous abyss on whose surface our little universe hangs quivering. Such a one is Sir Thomas Browne, a naturalist, a philosopher, a scholar, a physician, and a moralist, almost the last of the generation which produced Jeremy Taylor and Shakspeare. No thinker bears stronger witness to the wandering and inventive curiosity of the age. No writer has better displayed the brilliant and sombre imagination of the North. No one has spoken with a more eloquent emotion of death, the vast night of forgetfulness, of the all-devouring pit, of human vanity, which tries to create an immortality out of ephemeral glory or sculptured stones. No one has revealed, in more glowing and original expressions, the poetic sap which flows through all the minds of the age.

'But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it. Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal duration; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon. Who knows whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favour of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

'Oblivion is not to be hired. The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto the current arithmetick which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right declensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time, that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—diuturnity is a dream, and folly of expectation.

'Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon

us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision of nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days; and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. . . . All was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams. . . . Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infancy of his nature . . . Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity.'[1]

These are almost the words of a poet, and it is just this poet's imagination which urges him onward into science.[2] Amidst the productions of nature he abounds with conjectures, generalisations; he gropes about, proposing explanations, making trials, extending his guesses like so many flexible and vibrating tentacula into the four corners of the globe, into the most distant regions of fancy and truth. As he looks upon the tree-like and foliated crusts which are formed upon the surface of freezing liquids, he asks himself if this be not a regeneration of vegetable essences, dissolved in the liquid. At the sight of curdling blood or milk, he inquires whether there be not something analogous to the formation of the bird in the egg, or in that coagulation of chaos which gave birth to our world. In presence of that impalpable force which makes liquids freeze, he asks if apoplexies and cataracts are not the effects of a like power, and do not indicate the presence of a congealing agency. He is in presence of nature as an artist, a literary man, in presence of a living countenance, marking every feature, every movement of physiognomy, so as to be able to divine the passions of the inner disposition, ceaselessly correcting and reversing his interpretations, kept in agitation by the invisible forces which operate beneath the visible envelope. The whole of the middle-age and of antiquity, with their theories and imaginations, Platonism, Cabalism, Christian theology, Aristotle's substantial forms, the specific forms of the alchemists,—all human speculations, strangled or transformed one within the other, meet simultaneously in his brain, so as to open up to him vistas of this unknown world. The mass, the pile, the confusion, the inner fermentation and swarming, mingled with vapours and flashes, the tumultuous overloading of his imagination and his mind, oppress and agitate him. In this expectation and emotion his curiosity is enlisted in everything; in reference to the least fact, the most special, the oldest, the most chimerical, he conceives a chain of complicated investigation, calculating how the ark could contain all creatures, with their provision of food; how Perpenna, in his feast, arranged the invited so as to strike Sertorius,

[1] *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Wilkin, 1852, 3 vols. *Hydriotaphia*, iii. ch. v. 44 *et passim*.

[2] See Milsand, *Etude sur Sir Thomas Browne*, *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1858.

his guest; what trees must have grown on the banks of Acheron, supposing that there were any; whether quincunx plantations had not their origin in Eden, and whether the numbers and geometrical figures contained in the lozenge-form are not met with in all the productions of nature and art. You may recognise here the exuberance and the strange caprices of an inner development too ample and too strong. Archæology, chemistry, history, nature, there is nothing in which he is not interested to the extent of a passion, which does not cause his memory and his ingenuity to overflow, which does not summon up within him the idea of some force, certainly admirable, possibly infinite. But what finishes in depicting him, what signalises the advance of science, is the fact that his imagination provides a counterbalance against itself. He is as fertile in doubts as he is in explanations. If he sees the thousand reasons which tend to one view, he sees also the thousand which tend to the contrary. At the two extremities of the same fact, he raises up to the clouds, but in equal piles, the scaffolding of contradictory arguments. Having made a guess, he knows that it is but a guess; he pauses, ends with a perhaps, recommends verification. His writings consist only of opinions, given as such; even his principal work is a refutation of popular errors. After all, he proposes questions, suggests explanations, suspends his judgments; nothing more, but this is enough: when the search is so eager, when the paths in which it proceeds are so numerous, when it is so scrupulous in making certain of its basis, the issue of the pursuit is sure; we are but a few steps from the truth.

V.

In this band of scholars, dreamers, and enquirers, appears the most comprehensive, sensible, originative of the minds of the age, Francis Bacon, a great and luminous intellect, one of the finest of this poetic progeny, who, like his predecessors, was naturally disposed to clothe his ideas in the most splendid dress: in this age, a thought did not seem complete until it had assumed a form and colour. But what distinguishes him from the others is, that with him an image only serves to concentrate meditation. He reflected long, stamped on his mind all the parts and joints of his subject; and then, instead of dissipating his complete idea in a graduated chain of reasoning, he embodies it in a comparison so expressive, exact, transparent, that behind the figure we perceive all the details of the idea, like a liquor in a fair crystal vase. Judge of his style by a single example:

'For as water, whether it be the dew of Heaven or the springs of the earth, easily scatters and loses itself in the ground, except it be collected into some receptacle, where it may by union and consort comfort and sustain itself (and for that cause, the industry of man has devised aqueducts, cisterns, and pools, and likewise beautified them with various ornaments of magnificence and state, as well as for use and necessity); so this excellent liquor of knowledge, whether it descend

from divine inspiration or spring from human sense, would soon perish and vanish into oblivion, if it were not preserved in books, traditions, conferences, and especially in places appointed for such matters as universities, colleges, and schools, where it may have both a fixed habitation, and means and opportunity of increasing and collecting itself.'[1]

'The greatest error of all the rest, is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace, for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground, for strife and contention; or a shop, for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate.'[2]

This is his mode of thought, by symbols, not by analysis; instead of explaining his idea, he transposes and translates it,—translates it entire, to the smallest details, enclosing all in the majesty of a grand period, or in the brevity of a striking sentence. Thence springs a style of admirable richness, gravity, and vigour, now solemn and symmetrical, now concise and piercing, always elaborate and full of colour.[3] There is nothing in English prose superior to his diction.

Thence is derived also his manner of conceiving of things. He is not a dialectician, like Hobbes or Descartes, apt in arranging ideas, in educing one from another, in leading his reader from the simple to the complex by an unbroken chain. He is a producer of conceptions and of sentences. The matter being explored, he says to us: 'Such it is; touch it not on that side; it must be approached from the other.' Nothing more; no proof, no effort to convince: he affirms, and does nothing more; he has thought in the manner of artists and poets, and he speaks after the manner of prophets and seers. *Cogita et visa*, this title of one of his books might be the title of all. The most admirable, the *Novum Organum*, is a string of aphorisms,—a collection, as it were, of scientific decrees, as of an oracle who foresees the future and reveals the truth. And to make the resemblance complete, he expresses them by poetical figures, by enigmatic abbreviations, almost in Sibylline verses: *Idola specûs*, *Idola tribûs*, *Idola fori*, *Idola theatri*, every one will recall these strange names, by which he signifies the four kinds of illusions to which man is subject.[4] Shakspeare and the seers do not

[1] Bacon's *Works*. Translation of the *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Book ii.; To the King.

[2] *Ibid.* Book i. The true end of learning mistaken.

[3] Especially in the *Essays*.

[4] See also *Novum Organum*, Books i. and ii.; the twenty-seven kinds of examples, with their metaphorical names: *Instantiæ crucis*, *divortii januæ Instantiæ innuentes*, *polychrestæ*, *magicæ*, etc.

contain more vigorous or expressive condensations of thought, more resembling inspiration, and in Bacon they are to be found everywhere In short, his process is that of the creators; it is intuition, not reasoning. When he has laid up his store of facts, the greatest possible, on some vast subject, on some entire province of the mind, on the whole anterior philosophy, on the general condition of the sciences, on the power and limits of human reason, he casts over all this a comprehensive view, as it were a great net, brings up a universal idea, condenses his idea into a maxim, and hands it to us with the words, 'Verify and profit by it.'

There is nothing more hazardous, more like fantasy, than this mode of thought, when it is not checked by natural and strong good sense. This common sense, which is a kind of natural divination, the stable equilibrium of an intellect always gravitating to the true, like the needle to the north pole, Bacon possesses in the highest degree. He has a pre-eminently practical, even an utilitarian mind, such as we meet with later in Bentham, and such as their business habits were to impress more and more upon the English. At the age of sixteen, while at the university, he was dissatisfied with Aristotle's philosophy,[1] not that he thought meanly of the author, whom, on the contrary, he calls a great genius; but because it seemed to him of no practical utility, 'incapable of producing works which might promote the well-being of men.' We see that from the outset he struck upon his dominant idea: all else comes to him from this; a contempt for antecedent philosophy, the conception of a different system, the entire reformation of the sciences by the indication of a new goal, the definition of a distinct method, the opening up of unsuspected anticipations.[2] It is never speculation which he relishes, but the practical application of it. His eyes are turned not to heaven, but to earth, not to things 'abstract and vain,' but to things palpable and solid, not to curious but to profitable truths. He seeks to better the condition of men, to labour for the welfare of mankind, to enrich human life with new discoveries and new resources, to equip mankind with new powers and new instruments of action. His philosophy itself is but an instrument, *organum*, a sort of machine or lever constructed to enable the intellect to raise a weight, to break through obstacles, to open up vistas, to accomplish tasks which had hitherto surpassed its power. In his eyes, every special science, like science in general, should be an implement. He invites mathematicians to quit their pure geometry, to study numbers only with a view to their physical application, to seek formulas only to calculate real quantities and natural motions.

[1] *The Works of Francis Bacon*, London, 1824, vol. vii. p. 2. *Latin Biography* by Rawley.

[2] This point is brought out by the review of Lord Macaulay *Critical and Historical Essays*, vol. iii.

He recommends moralists to study the mind, the passions, habits. endeavours, not merely in a speculative way, but with a view to the cure or diminution of vice, and assigns to the science of morals as its end the amelioration of morals. For him, the object of science is always the establishment of an art, that is, the production of something of practical utility; when he wished to describe the efficacious nature of his philosophy apparent by a tale, he delineated in the *New Atlantis*, with a poet's boldness and the precision of a seer, with almost literal exactness, modern applications, and the present organisation of the sciences, academies, observatories, air-balloons, submarine vessels, the improvement of land, the transmutation of species, regenerations, the discovery of remedies, the preservation of food. 'The end of our foundation,' says his principal personage, 'is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.' And this 'possible' is infinite.

How did this grand and just conception originate? Doubtless common sense and genius too were necessary to its production; but neither common sense nor genius was lacking to men: there had been more than one who, remarking, like Bacon, the progress of particular industries, could, like him, have conceived of universal industry, and from certain limited ameliorations have advanced to unlimited amelioration. Here we see the power of combined efforts; men think they do everything by their individual thought, and they can do nothing without the assistance of the thoughts of their neighbours; they fancy that they are following the small voice within them, but they only hear it because it is swelled by the thousand buzzing and imperious voices, which, issuing from all surrounding things, far and near, are confounded with it in an harmonious vibration. Generally they hear it, as Bacon did, from the first moment of reflection; but it had become inaudible among the opposing sounds from without. Could this confidence in the infinite enlargement of human power, this glorious idea of the universal conquest of nature, this firm hope in the continual increase of well-being and happiness, have germinated, grown, occupied an intelligence entirely, and thence have struck its roots, been propagated and spread over neighbouring intelligences, in a time of discouragement and decay, when men believed the end of the world at hand, when things were falling into ruin about them, when Christian mysticism, as in the first centuries, ecclesiastical tyranny, as in the fourteenth century, were convincing them of their impotence, by perverting their intellectual efforts and curtailing their liberty? More than that: such hopes must then have seemed to be outbursts of pride, or suggestions of the flesh. They did seem so; and the last representatives of ancient science, and the first of the new, were exiled or imprisoned, assassinated or burned. In order to be developed, an idea must be in harmony with surrounding civilisation:

before man can expect to attain the dominion over nature, or attempts to improve his condition, amelioration must have begun on all sides, industries have increased, knowledge have been accumulated, the arts expanded, a hundred thousand irrefutable witnesses must have come to give proof of his power and assurance of his progress. The 'masculine birth of the time' (*temporis partus masculus*) is the title which Bacon applies to his work, and it is a true one. In fact, the whole age co-operated in it; by this creation it was finished. The consciousness of human power and prosperity furnished to the Renaissance its first energy, its ideal, its poetic materials, its distinguishing features; and now it furnished it with its final expression, its scientific doctrine, and its ultimate object.

We may add also, its method. For, the end of a journey once fixed, the route is laid down, since the end always determines the route; when the point of arrival is changed, the path of approach is changed, and science, varying its object, varies also its method. So long as it limited its effort to the satisfying an idle curiosity, opening out speculative vistas, establishing a sort of opera in speculative minds, it could launch out any moment into metaphysical abstractions and distinctions: it was enough for it to skim over experience; it soon quitted it, and came all at once upon great words, quiddities, the principle of individuation, final causes. Half proofs sufficed science; at bottom it did not care to establish a truth, but to get an opinion; and its instrument, the syllogism, was serviceable only for refutations, not for discoveries: it took general laws for a starting-point instead of a point of arrival; instead of going to find them, it fancied them found. The syllogism was good in the schools, not in nature; it made disputants, not discoverers. From the moment that science had art for an end, and men studied in order to act, all was transformed; for we cannot act without certain and precise knowledge. Forces, before they can be employed, must be measured and verified; before we can build a house, we must know exactly the resistance of the beams, or the house will collapse; before we can cure a sick man, we must know with certainty the effect of a remedy, or the patient will die. Practice makes certainty and exactitude a necessity to science, because practice is impossible when it has nothing to lean upon but guesses and approximations. How can we eliminate guesses and approximations? We must imitate the cases in which science, issuing in practice, is shown to be precise and certain, and these cases are the industries. We must, as in the industries, observe, essay, attempt, verify, keep our mind fixed 'on sensible and particular things,' advance to general rules only step by step; 'not anticipate' experience, but follow it; not imagine nature, but 'interpret it.' For every general effect, such as heat, whiteness, hardness, liquidity, we must seek a general condition, so that in producing the condition we may produce the effect. And for this it is necessary, 'by fit rejections

and exclusions,' to extract the condition sought from the heap of facts in which it lies buried, construct the table of cases from which the effect is absent, the table where it is present, the table where the effect is shown in various degrees, so as to isolate and bring to light the condition which produced it.[1] Then we shall have, not useless universal axioms, but 'efficacious mediate axioms,' true laws from which we can derive works, and which are the sources of power in the same degree as the sources of light.[2] Bacon described and predicted in this modern science and industry, their correspondence, method, resources, principle; and after more than two centuries, it is still to him that we go to discover the theory of what we are attempting and doing.

Beyond this great view, he has discovered nothing. Cowley, one of his admirers, justly said that, like Moses on Mount Pisgah, he was the first to announce the promised land; but he might have added quite as justly, that, like Moses, he did not enter there. He pointed out the route, but did not travel it; he taught men how to discover natural laws, but discovered none. His definition of heat is extremely imperfect. His *Natural History* is full of chimerical explanations.[3] Like the poets, he peoples nature with instincts and desires; attributes to bodies an actual voracity, to the atmosphere a thirst for the light, sounds, odours, vapours, which it drinks in; to metals a sort of haste to be incorporated with acids. He explains the duration of the bubbles of air which float on the surface of liquids, by supposing that air has a very small or no attraction to high latitudes. He sees in every quality, weight, ductility, hardness, a distinct essence which has its special cause; so that when one knows the cause of every quality of gold, one will be able to put all these causes together, and make gold. In brief, with the alchemists, Paracelsus and Gilbert, Kepler himself, with all the men of his time, men of imagination, nourished on Aristotle, he represents nature as a compound of secret and lively energies, inexplicable and primordial forces, distinct and indecomposable essences, adapted each by the will of the Creator to produce a distinct effect. He almost saw souls endowed with dull repugnances and occult inclinations, which aspire to or resist certain directions, certain mixtures, and certain localities. On this account also he confounds everything in his researches in an undistinguishable mass, vegetative and medicinal properties, physical and moral, without considering the most complex as depending on the simplest, but each on the contrary in itself, and taken apart, as an irreducible and independent existence. Obstinate in this error, the thinkers of the age mark time without advancing. They see clearly with Bacon the wide field of discovery, but they cannot advance into it. They want an idea, and for want of this idea they do not advance. The disposition of mind which but now was a lever, is become

[1] *Novum Organum*, ii. 15 and 16. [2] *Novum Organum*, i. i. 3.
[3] *Natural History*, 800, 24, etc. *De Augmentis*, iii. i.

an obstacle: it must be changed, that the obstacle may be got rid of For ideas, I mean great and efficacious ones, do not come at will nor by chance, by the effort of an individual, or by a happy accident. Like literatures and religions, methods and philosophies arise from the spirit of the age; and this spirit of the age makes them potent or powerless. One state of public intelligence excludes a certain kind of literature; another, a certain scientific conception. When it happens thus, writers and thinkers labour in vain, the literature is abortive, the conception does not make its appearance. In vain they turn one way and another, trying to remove the weight which hinders them; something stronger than themselves paralyses their hands and frustrates their endeavours. The central pivot of the vast wheel on which human affairs move must be displaced one notch, that all may move with its motion. At this moment the pivot was moved, and thus a revolution of the great wheel begins, bringing round a new conception of nature, and in consequence that part of the method which was lacking. To the diviners, the creators, the comprehensive and impassioned minds who seized objects in a lump and in masses, succeeded the discursive thinkers, the systematic thinkers, the graduated and clear logicians, who, disposing ideas in continuous series, led the hearer insensibly from the simple to the most complex by easy and unbroken paths. Descartes superseded Bacon; the classical age obliterated the Renaissance; poetry and lofty imagination gave way before rhetoric, eloquence, and analysis. In this transformation of mind, ideas were transformed. Everything was sobered down and simplified. The universe, like all else, was reduced to two or three notions; and the conception of nature, which was poetical, became mechanical. Instead of souls, living forces, repugnances, and attractions, we have pulleys, levers, impelling forces. The world, which seemed a mass of instinctive powers, is now like a mere machinery of serrated wheels. Beneath this adventurous supposition lies a large and certain truth: that there is, namely, a scale of facts, some at the summit very complex, others at the base very simple; those above having their origin in those below, so that the lower ones explain the higher; and that we must seek the primary laws of things in the laws of motion. The search was made, and Galileo found them. Thenceforth the work of the Renaissance, passing the extreme point to which Bacon had pushed it, and at which he had left it, was able to proceed onward by itself, and did so proceed, without limit.

CHAPTER II.

The Theatre.

I. The public—The stage.
II. Manners of the sixteenth century—Violent and complete expansion of nature.
III. English manners—Expansion of the energetic and gloomy character.
IV. The poets—General harmony between the character of a poet and that of his age—Nash, Decker, Kyd, Peele, Lodge, Greene—Their condition and life—Marlowe—His life—His works—*Tamburlaine*—*The Jew of Malta*—*Edward II.*—*Faustus*—His conception of man.
V. Formation of this drama—The process and character of this art—Imitative sympathy, which depicts by expressive specimens—Contrast of classical and Germanic art—Psychological construction and proper sphere of these two arts.
VI. Male characters—Furious passions—Tragical events—Exaggerated characters—*The Duke of Milan* by Massinger—Ford's *Annabella*—Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and *Vittoria*—Female characters—Germanic idea of love and marriage—Euphrasia, Bianca, Arethusa, Ordella, Aspasia, Amoret, in Beaumont and Fletcher—Penthea in Ford—Agreement of the moral and physical type.

WE must look at this world more closely, and beneath the ideas which are developed seek for the men who live; it is the theatre especially which is the original product of the English Renaissance, and it is the theatre especially which will exhibit the men of the English Renaissance. Forty poets, amongst them ten of superior rank, and the greatest of all artists who have represented the soul in words; many hundreds of pieces, and nearly fifty masterpieces; the drama extended over all the provinces of history, imagination, and fancy,—expanded so as to embrace comedy, tragedy, pastoral and fanciful literature—to represent all degrees of human condition, and all the caprices of human invention—to express all the sensitive details of actual truth, and all the philosophic grandeur of general reflection; the stage disencumbered of all precept and freed from all imitation, given up and appropriated in the minutest particulars to the reigning taste and the public intelligence: all this was a vast and manifold work, capable by its flexibility, its greatness, and its form, of receiving and preserving the exact imprint of the age and of the nation.[1]

[1] Shakspeare, 'The very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.'

I.

Let us try, then, to set before our eyes this public, this audience, and this stage—all connected with one another, as in every natural and living work; and if ever there was a living and natural work, it is here. There were already seven theatres in Shakspeare's time, so brisk and universal was the taste for representations. Great and rude contrivances, awkward in their construction, barbarous in their appointments; but a fervid imagination readily supplied all that they lacked, and hardy bodies endured all inconveniences without difficulty. On a dirty site, on the banks of the Thames, rose the principal theatre, the Globe, a sort of hexagonal tower, surrounded by a muddy ditch, surmounted by a red flag. The common people could enter as well as the rich: there were sixpenny, twopenny, even penny seats; but they could not see it without money. If it rained, and it often rains in London, the people in the pit, butchers, mercers, bakers, sailors, apprentices, receive the streaming rain upon their heads. I suppose they did not trouble themselves about it; it was not so long since they began to pave the streets of London; and when men, like them, have had experience of sewers and puddles, they are not afraid of catching cold. While waiting for the piece, they amuse themselves after their fashion, drink beer, crack nuts, eat fruits, howl, and now and then resort to their fists; they have been known to fall upon the actors, and turn the theatre upside down. At other times they have gone in disgust to the tavern to give the poet a hiding, or toss him in a blanket; they were rude jokers, and there was no month when the cry of 'Clubs' did not call them out of their shops to exercise their brawny arms. When the beer took effect, there was a great upturned barrel in the pit, a peculiar receptacle for general use. The smell rises, and then comes the cry, 'Burn the juniper!' They burn some in a plate on the stage, and the heavy smoke fills the air. Certainly the folk there assembled could scarcely get disgusted at anything, and cannot have had sensitive noses. In the time of Rabelais there was not much cleanness to speak of. Remember that they were hardly out of the middle age, and that in the middle-age man lived on the dunghill.

Above them, on the stage, were the spectators able to pay a shilling, the elegant people, the gentlefolk. These were sheltered from the rain, and if they chose to pay an extra shilling, could have a stool. To this were reduced the prerogatives of rank and the devices of comfort: it often happened that stools were lacking; then they stretched themselves on the ground: they were not dainty at such times. They play cards, smoke, insult the pit, who give it them back without stinting, and throw apples at them into the bargain. As for the gentlefolk, they gesticulate, swear in Italian, French, English;[1] crack

[1] Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*; *Cynthia's Revels*.

aloud jokes in dainty, composite, high-coloured words: in short, they have the energetic, original, gay manners of artists, the same humour, the same absence of constraint, and, to complete the resemblance, the same desire to make themselves singular, the same imaginative cravings, the same absurd and picturesque devices, beards cut to a point, into the shape of a fan, a spade, the letter T, gaudy and expensive dresses, copied from five or six neighbouring nations, embroidered, laced with gold, motley, continually heightened in effect, or changed for others: there was, as it were, a carnival in their brains as on their backs.

With such spectators illusions could be produced without much trouble: there were no preparations or perspectives; few or no moveable scenes: their imaginations took all this upon them. A scroll in big letters announced to the public that they were in London or Constantinople; and that was enough to carry the public to the desired place. There was no trouble about probability. Sir Philip Sidney writes:

'You shall have Asia of the one side, and Africke of the other, and so many other under-kingdomes, that the Plaier when hee comes in, must ever begin with telling where hee is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three Ladies walke to gather flowers, and then wee must beleeve the stage to be a garden. By and by wee heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a rocke; . . . while in the meane time two armies flie in, represented with foure swordes and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberall. For ordinary it is, that two young Princes fall in love, after many traverses, shee is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy, hee is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe; and all this in two houres space.'[1]

Doubtless these enormities were somewhat reduced under Shakspeare; with a few hangings, rude representations of animals, towers, forests, they assisted somewhat the public imagination. But in fact, in Shakspeare's plays as in all others, the public imagination is the great contriver; it must lend itself to all, substitute all, accept for a queen a young boy whose beard is beginning to grow, endure in one act twelve changes of place, leap suddenly over twenty years or five hundred miles,[2] take half a dozen supernumeraries for forty thousand men, and to have represented by the rolling of the drums all the battles of Cæsar, Henry v., Coriolanus, Richard III. All this, imagination, being so overflowing and so young, does accept! Recall your own youth; for my part, the deepest emotions I have had at a theatre were given to me by an ambling bevy of four young girls, playing comedy and drama on a stage in a coffeehouse; true, I was eleven years old. So in this theatre, at this moment, their souls were fresh, as ready to feel everything as the poet was to dare everything.

[1] *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. 1629, p. 562.

[2] *Winter's Tale*; *Cymbeline*; *Julius Cæsar*.

II.

These are but externals; let us try to advance further, to observe the passions, the bent of mind, the inner man: it is this inner state which raised and modelled the drama, as everything else; invisible inclinations are everywhere the cause of visible works, and the interior shapes the exterior. What are these townspeople, courtiers, this public, whose taste fashions the theatre? what is there particular in the structure and condition of their mind? The condition must needs be particular; for the drama flourishes all of a sudden, and for sixty years together, with marvellous luxuriance, and at the end of this time is arrested so that no effort could revive it. The structure must be particular; for of all theatres, old and new, this is distinct in form, and displays a style, action, characters, an idea of life, which are not found in any age or any country beside. This particular feature is the free and complete expansion of nature.

What we call nature in men is, man such as he was before culture and civilisation had deformed and re-formed him. Almost always, when a new generation arrives at manhood and consciousness, it finds a code of precepts which it imposes on itself, with all the weight and authority of antiquity. A hundred kinds of chains, a hundred thousand kinds of ties, religion, morality, manners, every legislation which regulates sentiments, morals, manners, fetter and tame the creature of impulse and passion which breathes and frets within each of us. There is nothing like that here. It is a regeneration, and the curb of the past is wanting to the present. Catholicism, reduced to external ceremony and clerical chicanery, had just ended; Protestantism, arrested in its endeavours, or straying into sects, had not yet gained the mastery; the religion of discipline was grown feeble, and the religion of morals was not yet established; men ceased to listen to the directions of the clergy, and had not yet spelt out the law of conscience. The church was turned into an assembly room, as in Italy; the young fellows came to St. Paul's to walk, laugh, chatter, display their new cloaks; the thing had even passed into a custom. They paid for the noise they made with their spurs, and this tax was a source of income to the canons;[1] pickpockets, the girls of the town, came there by crowds; these latter struck their bargains while service was going on. Imagine, in short, that the scruples of conscience and the severity of the Puritans were odious things, and that they ridiculed them on the stage,

[1] Strype, in his *Annals of the Reformation* (1571), says: 'Many now were wholly departed from the communion of the church, and came no more to hear divine service in their parish churches, nor received the holy sacrament, according to the laws of the realm.' Richard Baxter, in his *Life*, published in 1696, says: 'We lived in a country that had but little preaching at all. . . . In the village where I lived the Reader read the Common Prayer briefly; and the rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except Eating time, was spent in Dancing under a Maypole

and judge of the difference between this sensual, unbridled England, and the correct, disciplined, stern England of our own time. Ecclesiastical or secular, we find no signs of rule. In the failure of faith, reason had not gained sway, and opinion is as void of authority as tradition. The imbecile age, which has just ended, continues buried in scorn, with its ravings, its verse-makers, and its pedantic text-books; and out of the liberal opinions derived from antiquity, from Italy, France, and Spain, every one could pick as it pleased him, without stooping to restraint or acknowledging a superiority. There was no model imposed on them, as nowadays; instead of affecting imitation, they affected originality.[1] Each strove to be himself, with his own oaths, fashions, costumes, his specialties of conduct and humour, and to be unlike every one else. They said not, 'So and so is done,' but 'I do so and so.' Instead of restraining themselves, they expanded. There was no etiquette of society; save for an exaggerated jargon of chivalresque courtesy, they are masters of speech and action on the impulse of the moment. You will find them free from decorum, as of all else. In this outbreak and absence of fetters, they resemble thorough-bred horses let loose in the meadow. Their inborn instincts have not been tamed, nor muzzled, nor diminished.

On the contrary, they have been preserved intact by bodily and military training; and escaping as they were from barbarism, not from civilisation, they had not been acted upon by the inner softening and hereditary tempering which are now transmitted with the blood, and civilise a man from the moment of his birth. This is why man, who for three centuries has been a domestic animal, was still almost a savage beast, and the force of his muscles and the strength of his nerves increased the boldness and energy of his passions. Look at these uncultivated men, men of the people, how suddenly the blood warms and rises to their face; their fists double, their lips press together, and those vigorous bodies are hurried at once into action. The courtiers of that age were like our men of the people. They had the same taste for the exercise of their limbs, the same indifference toward the inclemencies of the weather, the same coarseness of language, the same undisguised sensuality. They were carmen in body and gentlemen in sentiment, with the dress of actors and the tastes of artists. 'At fourtene,' says John Hardyng, 'a lordes sonnes shalle to felde hunte the dere, and catch an hardynesse. For dere to hunte and slea, and see them blede, ane hardyment gyffith to his courage. . . . At sextene yere, to werray and to wage, to juste and ryde, and castels to assayle . . . and every

and a great tree, not far from my father's door, where all the Town did meet together. And though one of my father's own Tenants was the piper, he could not restrain him nor break the sport. So that we could not read the Scripture in our family without the great disturbance of the Taber and Pipe and noise in the street.'

[1] Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his humour*.

day his armure to assay in fete of armes with some of his meyne.'[1] When ripened to manhood, he is employed with the bow, in wrestling, leaping, vaulting. Henry VIII.'s court, in its noisy merriment, was like a village fair. The king, says Holinshed, exercised himself 'dailie in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, casting of the barre, plaieing at the recorders, flute, virginals, in setting of songs, and making of ballads.' He leaps the moats with a pole, and was once within an ace of being killed. He is so fond of combat, that publicly, on the field of the Cloth of Gold, he seized Francis I. in his arms to throw him. This is how a soldier or a bricklayer nowadays tries a new comrade. In fact, they regarded as amusements, like soldiers and bricklayers, gross jests and brutal buffooneries. In every great house there was a fool, 'whose business was to bring out pointed jests, to make eccentric gestures, horrible faces, to sing licentious songs,' as one might hear now in a beer-house. They thought malice and obscenity a joke. They were foul-mouthed, they swallowed Rabelais' words undiluted, and delighted in conversation which would revolt us. They had no respect for humanity; the empire of proprieties and the habits of good breeding began only under Louis XIV., and by imitation of the French; at this time they all blurted out the word that fitted in, and that was most frequently a coarse word. You will see on the stage, in Shakspeare's *Pericles*, the filth of a haunt of vice.[2] The great lords, the well-dressed ladies, spoke Billingsgate slang. When Henry V. paid his court to Catherine of France, it was with the coarse bearing of a sailor who might have taken a fancy to a sutler; and like the tars who tattoo a heart on their arms to prove their love for the girls they left behind them, you find men who 'devoured sulphur and drank urine'[3] to win their mistress by a proof of affection. Humanity is as much lacking as decency.[4] Blood, suffering, does not move them. The

[1] *The Chronicle* of John Hardyng (1436), ed. H. Ellis, 1812. Preface.

[2] Act iv. 2 and 4. See also the character of Calypso in Massinger; Putana in Ford; Protalyce in Beaumont and Fletcher.

[3] Middleton, *Dutch Courtezan.*

[4] Commission given by Henry VIII. to the Earl of Hertford, 1544: 'You are there to put all to fire and sword; to burn Edinburgh town, and to raze and deface it, when you have sacked it, and gotten what you can out of it. . . . Do what you can out of hand, and without long tarrying, to beat down and overthrow the castle, sack Holyrood-House, and as many towns and villages about Edinburgh as ye conveniently can; sack Leith, and burn and subvert it, and all the rest, putting man, woman, and child to fire and sword, without exception, when any resistance shall be made against you; and this done, pass over to the Fife land, and extend like extremities and destructions in all towns and villages whereunto ye may reach conveniently, not forgetting amongst all the rest, so to spoil and turn upside down the cardinal's town of St Andrew's, as the upper stone may be the nether, and not one stick stand by another, sparing no creature alive within the same, specially such as either in friendship or blood be allied to the cardinal. This journey shall succeed most to his majesty's honour.'—*Pictorial History of England*, ii. 440, note.

court frequents bear and bull baitings, where dogs are ripped up and chained beasts are sometimes beaten to death, and it was, says an officer of the palace, 'a charming entertainment.'[1] No wonder they used their arms like clodhoppers and gossips. Elizabeth used to beat her maids of honour, 'so that these beautiful girls could often be heard crying and lamenting in a piteous manner.' One day she spat upon Sir Mathew's fringed coat; at another time, when Essex, whom she was scolding, turned his back, she gave him a box on the ears. It was then the practice of great ladies to beat their children and their servants. Poor Jane Grey was sometimes so wretchedly 'boxed, struck, pinched, and ill-treated in other manners which she dare not relate,' that she used to wish herself dead. Their first idea is to come to words, to blows, to have satisfaction. As in feudal times, they appeal at once to arms, and retain the habit of gaining justice for themselves, and without delay. 'On Thursday laste,' writes Gilbert Talbot to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, 'as my Lorde Rytche was rydynge in the streates, there was one Wyndam that stode in a dore, and shotte a dagge at him, thynkynge to have slayne him. . . . The same daye, also, as Sr John Conway was goynge in the streetes, M^r^ Lodovyke Grevell came sodenly upon him, and stroke him on the hedd w^th^ a sworde. . . . I am forced to trouble yo^r^ Honors w^th^ thes tryflynge matters, for I know no greater.'[2] No one, not even the queen, is safe among these violent dispositions.[3] Again, when one man struck another in the precincts of the court, his hand was cut off, and the arteries stopped with a red-hot iron. Only such atrocious imitations of their own crimes, and the painful image of bleeding and suffering flesh, could tame their vehemence and restrain the uprising of their instincts. Judge now what materials they furnish to the theatre, and what characters they look for at the theatre: to please the public, the stage cannot deal too much in open lust and the strongest passions; it must depict man attaining the limit of his desires, unchecked, almost mad, now trembling and rooted before the white palpitating flesh which his eyes devour, now haggard and grinding his teeth before the enemy whom he wishes to tear to pieces, now carried beyond himself and overwhelmed at the sight of the honours and wealth which he courts, always raging and enveloped in a tempest of eddying ideas, sometimes shaken by impetuous joy, more often on the verge of fury and madness, stronger, more ardent, more daringly let loose beyond the pale of reason and law than he himself ever was. We hear from the stage as from the history of the time, these fierce murmurs: the sixteenth century is like a den of lions.

Amid passions so strong as these there is not one lacking. Nature

[1] Laneham, *A Goodly Relief.*

[2] 13th February, 1587. Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, ii. p. 165 See also the same work for al. these details.

[3] Essex, when struck by the queen, put his hand on the hilt of his sword.

appears here in all its violence, but also in all its fulness. If nothing had been softened, nothing had been mutilated. It is the entire man who is displayed, heart, mind, body, senses, with his noblest and finest aspirations, as with his most bestial and savage appetites, without the preponderance of any dominant circumstance to cast him altogether in one direction, to exalt or degrade him. He has not become rigid, as he will be under Puritanism. He is not uncrowned, as in the Restoration. After the hollowness and weariness of the fifteenth century, he rose up by a second birth, as before in Greece man had risen by a first birth; and now, as then, the temptations of the outer world came combined to raise his faculties from their sloth and torpor. A sort of generous warmth spread over them to ripen and make them flourish. Peace, prosperity, comfort began; new industries and increasing activity suddenly multiplied objects of utility and luxury tenfold. America and India, by their discovery, caused the treasures and prodigies heaped up afar over distant seas to shine before their eyes; antiquity re-discovered, sciences mapped out, the Reformation begun, books multiplied by printing, ideas by books, doubled the means of enjoyment, imagination, and thought. They wanted to enjoy, to imagine, and to think; for the desire grows with the attraction, and here all attractions were combined. There were attractions of the senses, in the chambers which they began to warm, in the beds newly furnished with pillows, in the carriages which they began to use for the first time. There were attractions for the imagination in the new palaces, arranged after the Italian manner; in the variegated hangings from Flanders; in the rich garments, gold-embroidered, which, being continually changed, combined the fancies and the splendours of all Europe. There were attractions for the mind, in the noble and beautiful writings which, spread abroad, translated, explained, brought in philosophy, eloquence, and poetry, from the restored antiquity, and from the surrounding Renaissance. Under this appeal all aptitudes and instincts at once started up; the low and the lofty, ideal and sensual love, gross cupidity and pure generosity. Recall what you yourself experienced, when from being a child you became a man: what wishes for happiness, what breadth of anticipation, what intoxication of heart you indulged in in face of all these joys; with what impulse your hands reached involuntarily and all at once every branch of the tree, and would not let a single fruit escape. At sixteen years, like Chérubin,[1] we wish for a servant girl while we adore a Madonna; we are capable of every species of covetousness, and also of every species of self-denial; we find virtue more lovely, our meals more enjoyable; pleasure has more zest, heroism more worth; there is no allurement which is not keen; the sweetness and novelty of things are too strong; and in the hive of passions which buzzes within us, and stings us like the sting

[1] A page in the *Mariage de Figaro*, a comedy by Beaumarchais.—TR.

of a bee, we can do nothing but plunge, one after another, into all sensations. Such were the men of this time, Raleigh, Essex, Elizabeth, Henry VIII. himself, excessive and inconstant, ready for devotion and for crime, violent in good and evil, heroic with strange weaknesses, humble with sudden changes of mood, never vile with premeditation like the roysterers of the Restoration, never rigid on principle like the Puritans of the Revolution, capable of weeping like children,[1] and of dying like men, often base courtiers, more than once true knights, displaying constantly, amidst all these contradictions of bearing, only the overflowing of nature. Thus prepared, they could take in everything, sanguinary ferocity and refined generosity, the brutality of shameless debauchery, and the most divine innocence of love, accept all the characters, prostitutes and virgins, princes and mountebanks, pass quickly from trivial buffoonery to lyrical sublimities, listen alternately to the quibbles of clowns and the songs of lovers. The drama even, in order to imitate and satisfy the prolixity of their nature, must take all tongues, pompous, inflated verse, loaded with imagery, and side by side with this, vulgar prose: more, it must distort its natural style and limits; put songs, poetical devices, in the discourse of courtiers and the speeches of statesmen; bring on the stage the fairy world of the opera, as Middleton says, gnomes, nymphs of the land and sea, with their groves and their meadows; compel the gods to descend upon the stage, and hell itself to furnish its world of marvels. No other theatre is so complicated; for nowhere else do we find men so complete.

III.

In this free and universal expansion, the passions had their special bent withal, which was an English one, inasmuch as they were English. After all, in every age, under every civilisation, a people is always itself. Whatever be its dress, goat-skin blouse, gold-laced doublet, black dress-coat, the five or six great instincts which it possessed in its forests, follow it in its palaces and offices. To this day, warlike passions, a gloomy humour, subsist under the regularity and comfort of modern manners.[2] Their native energy and harshness pierce through the perfection of culture and the habits of comfort. Rich young men, on leaving Oxford, go to hunt bears in Canada, the elephant at the Cape of Good Hope, live under canvas, box, jump hedges on horseback, sail their clippers on dangerous coasts, delight in solitude and peril. The ancient Saxon, the old rover of the Scandinavian seas, have not perished. Even at school the children ill-treat one another, withstand

[1] The great Chancellor Burleigh often wept, so harshly was he used by Elizabeth.

[2] Compare, to understand this character, the parts assigned to James Harlowe by Richardson, old Osborne by Thackeray, Sir Giles Overreach by Massinger, and Manly by Wycherley.

one another, fight like men; and their character is so indomitable, that they need the birch and blows to reduce them to the discipline of law. Judge what they were in the sixteenth century: the English race passed then for 'the most warlike race' of Europe, 'the most redoubtable in battle, the most impatient of anything like slavery.'[1] 'English savages' is what Cellini calls them; and the 'great shins of beef' with which they fill themselves, nourish the force and ferocity of their instincts. To harden them thoroughly, institutions work in the same groove with nature. The nation is armed, every man is brought up like a soldier, bound to have arms according to his condition, to exercise himself on Sundays or holidays; from the yeoman to the lord, the old military constitution keeps them enrolled and ready for action.[2] In a state which resembles an army, it is necessary that punishments, as in an army, shall inspire terror; and to aggravate them, the hideous Wars of the Roses, which on every flaw of the succession are ready to break out again, are ever present in their recollection. Such instincts, such a constitution, such a history, raises before them, with tragic severity, the idea of life: death is at hand, and wounds, the block, tortures. The fine cloaks of purple which the Renaissance of the South displayed joyfully in the sun, to wear like a holiday garment, are here stained with blood, and bordered with black. Throughout,[3] a stern discipline, and the axe ready for every suspicion of treason: great men, bishops, a chancellor, princes, the king's relatives, queens, a protector kneeling in the straw, sprinkled the Tower with their blood; one after the other they marched past, stretched out their necks; the Duke of Buckingham, Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Catherine Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Admiral Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, Lady Jane Grey and her husband, the Duke of Northumberland, Mary Stuart, the Earl of Essex, all on the throne, or on the steps of the throne, in the highest rank of honours, beauty, youth, and genius: of the bright procession nothing is left but senseless trunks, marred by the tender mercies of the executioner. Shall I count the funeral pyres, the hangings, living men cut down from the gibbet, disemowelled, quartered,[4] their limbs cast into the fire, their heads exposed on the walls? There is a page in Holinshed which reads like a death register:

'The five and twentith daie of Maie (1535), was in saint Paules church at London examined nineteene men and six women born in Holland, whose opinions were (heretical). Fourteene of them were condemned, a man and a woman of them were

[1] Hentzner's *Travels;* Benvenuto Cellini. See *passim*, the costumes printed in Venice and Germany: *Bellicosissimi.* Froude, i. pp. 19, 52.

[2] This is not so true of the English now, if it was in the sixteenth century, as it is of continental nations. The French *lycées* are far more military in character than English schools.—TR.

[3] Froude's *Hist. of England*, vols. i. ii. iii.

[4] 'When his heart was torn out he uttered a deep groan.'—*Execution of Parry;* Strype, iii. 251.

burned in Smithfield, the other twelve were sent to other townes, there to be burnt. On the nineteenth of June were three moonkes of the Charterhouse hanged, drawne, and quartered at Tiburne, and their heads and quarters set up about London, for denieng the king to be supreme head of the church. Also the one and twentith of the same moneth, and for the same cause, doctor John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, was beheaded for denieng of the supremacie, and his head set upon London bridge, but his bodie buried within Barking churchyard. The pope had elected him a cardinall, and sent his hat as far as Calis, but his head was off before his hat was on: so that they met not. On the sixt of Julie was Sir Thomas Moore beheaded for the like crime, that is to wit, for denieng the king to be supreme head.'[1]

None of these murders seem extraordinary; the chroniclers mention them without growing indignant; the condemned go quietly to the block, as if the thing were perfectly natural. Anne Boleyn said seriously, before giving up her head to the executioner: 'I praie God save the king, and send him long to reigne over you, for a gentler, nor a more mercifull prince was there never.'[2] Society is, as it were, in a state of siege, so strained that beneath the idea of order every one entertained the idea of the scaffold. They saw it, the terrible machine, planted on all the highways of human life; and the byways as well as the highways led to it. A sort of martial law, introduced by conquests into civil affairs, entered thence into ecclesiastical matters,[3] and social economy ended by being enslaved by it. As in a camp,[4] expenditure, dress, the food of each class, are fixed and restricted; no one might stray out of his district, be idle, live after his own devices. Every stranger was seized, interrogated; if he could not give a good account of himself, the parish-stocks bruised his limbs, as in a regiment he passed for a spy and an enemy. Any person, says the law,[5] found living idly or loiteringly for the space of three days, shall be marked with a hot iron on his breast, and adjudged as a slave to the man who shall inform against him. This one 'shall take the same slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and refuse meat, and cause him to work, by beating, chaining, or otherwise, in such work and labour as he shall put him to, be it never so vile.' He may sell him, bequeath him, let him out for hire, or trade upon him 'after the like sort as they may do of any other their moveable goods or chattels,' put a ring of iron about his neck or leg; if he runs away and absents himself for fourteen days, he is branded on the forehead with a hot iron, and remains a slave for the whole of his life; if he runs away a second time, he is put to death. Sometimes, says More, you might see a score of thieves hung on the same gibbet. In one year[6] forty persons were put to death in the county of Somerset alone, and in each county there were three or

[1] Holinshed, *Chronicles of England*, iii. p. 793.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. p. 797.
[3] Under Henry IV. and Henry V.
[4] Froude, i. 15.
[5] In 1547. *Pict. History*, ii. 467.
[6] In 1596. *Pict. History*, ii. 907.

four hundred vagabonds who would gather together and rob in armed bands of sixty at a time. Follow the whole of this history closely, the fires of Mary, the pillories of Elizabeth, and it is plain that the moral tone of the land, like its physical condition, is harsh by comparison with all its neighbours. They have no relish in their enjoyments, as in Italy; what is called Merry England is England given up to animal ecstasy, a coarse animation produced by abundant feeding, continued prosperity, courage, and self-reliance; voluptuousness does not exist in this climate and this race. Mingled with the beautiful popular beliefs, the lugubrious dreams and the cruel nightmare of witchcraft make their appearance. Bishop Jewell, preaching before the queen, tells her that witches and sorcerers within these few last years are marvellously increased. Some ministers assert

'That they have had in their parish at one instant, xvij or xviij witches; meaning such as could worke miracles supernaturallie; that they work spells by which men pine away even unto death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft; that instructed by the devil, they make ointments of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the aire, and accomplish all their desires. When a child is not baptized, or defended by the sign of the cross, then the witches catch them from their mothers sides in the night . . . kill them . . . or after buriall steale them out of their graves, and seeth them in a caldron, until their flesh be made potable. . . . It is an infallible rule, that everie fortnight, or at the least everie moneth, each witch must kill one child at the least for hir part.'

Here was something to make the teeth chatter with fright. Add to this revolting and absurd description, wretched tomfooleries, details about the infernal cauldron, all the nastinesses which could haunt the trivial imagination of a hideous and drivelling old woman, and you have the spectacles, provided by Middleton and Shakspeare, and which suit the sentiments of the age and the national humour. The fundamental gloom pierces through the glow and rapture of poetry. Mournful legends have multiplied; every churchyard has its ghost; wherever a man has been murdered his spirit appears. Many dare not leave their village after sunset. In the evening, before bed-time, people talk of the coach which is seen drawn by headless horses, with headless postilions and coachmen, or of unhappy spirits who, compelled to inhabit the plain, under the sharp north-east wind, pray for the shelter of a hedge or a valley They dream terribly of death:

'To die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst

Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!'[1]

The greatest speak with a sad resignation of the infinite obscurity which embraces our poor, short, glimmering life, our life, which is but a troubled dream;[2] the sad state of humanity, which is but passion, madness, and sorrow; the human being who is himself, perhaps, but a vain phantom, a grievous sick man's dream. In their eyes we roll down a fatal slope, where chance dashes us one against the other, and the destiny which drives us, only shatters after it has blinded us. And at the end of all is 'the silent grave, no conversation, no joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers, no careful father's counsel; nothing's heard, nor nothing is, but all oblivion, dust, and endless darkness.'[3] If yet there were nothing, 'to die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream.' To dream sadly, to fall into a nightmare like the nightmare of life, like that in which we are struggling and crying to-day, panting with hoarse throat!—this is their idea of man and of existence, the national idea, which fills the stage with calamities and despair, which makes a display of tortures and massacres, which abounds in folly and crime, which holds up death as the issue throughout. A threatening and sombre fog veils their mind like their sky, and joy, like the sun, only pierces through it, and upon them, strongly and at intervals. They are different from the Latin race, and in the common Renaissance they are regenerated otherwise than the Latin races. The free and full development of the pure nature which, in Greece and Italy, ends in the painting of beauty and happy energy, ends here in the painting of ferocious energy, agony, and death.

IV.

Thus was this theatre produced; a theatre unique in history, like the admirable and fleeting epoch from which it sprang, the work and the picture of this young world, as natural, as unshackled, and as tragic as itself. When an original and national drama springs up, the poets who establish it, carry in themselves the sentiments which it represents. They display better than other men the public spirit, because the public spirit is stronger in them than in other men. The passions which surround them, break forth in their heart with a harsher or a juster cry, and hence their voices become the voices of all. Chivalric and Catholic Spain had her interpreters in her enthusiasts and her Don Quixotes: in Calderon, first a soldier, afterwards a priest; in Lope de Vega, a volunteer at fifteen, a passionate lover, a wandering duellist, a soldier

[1] Shakspeare, *Measure for Measure*, Act iii. 1. See also *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*.

[2] 'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'—*Tempest*. iv. 1.

[3] Beaumont and Fletcher, *Thierry and Theodoret*, Act iv. 1.

of the Armada, finally, a priest and familiar of the Holy Office; so ardent that he fasts till he is exhausted, faints with emotion while singing mass, and in his flagellations stains the walls of his cell with blood. Calm and noble Greece had in her principal tragic poet one of the most accomplished and fortunate of her sons:[1] Sophocles, first in song and palæstra; who at fifteen sang, unclad, the pæan before the trophy of Salamis, and who afterwards, as ambassador, general, ever loving the gods and impassioned for his state, offered, in his life as in his works, the spectacle of the incomparable harmony which made the beauty of the ancient world, and which the modern world will never more attain to. Eloquent and worldly France, in the age which carried the art of decency and conversation to its highest pitch, finds, to unite her oratorical tragedies and to paint her drawing-room passions, the most able craftsman of words: Racine, a courtier, a man of the world; the most capable, by the delicacy of his tact and the adaptation of his style, of making men of the world and courtiers speak. Equally in England the poets are in harmony with their works. Almost all are Bohemians, born of the people,[2] yet educated, and for the most part having studied at Oxford or Cambridge, but poor, so that their education contrasts with their condition. Ben Jonson is the step-son of a bricklayer, and himself a bricklayer; Marlowe is the son of a shoemaker; Shakspeare of a woollen merchant; Massinger of a servant.[3] They live as they can, get into debt, write for their bread, go on the stage. Peele, Lodge, Marlowe, Jonson, Shakspeare, Heywood, are actors; most of the details which we have of their lives are taken from the journal of Henslowe, an old pawnbroker, later a money-lender and manager of a theatre, who gives them work, advances money to them, receives their manuscripts or their wardrobes as security. For a play he gives seven or eight pounds; after the year 1600 prices rise, and reach as high as twenty or twenty-five pounds. It is clear that, even after this increase, the trade of author scarcely brings in bread. In order to earn money, it was necessary, like Shakspeare, to become a manager, to try to have a share in the property of a theatre; but the case is rare, and the life which they lead, a life of comedians and actors, improvident, full of excess, lost amid debauchery and acts of violence, amidst women of evil fame, in contact with young profligates, in provocations and misery, imagination and licence, generally leads

[1] *Διεπονήθη δὲ ἐν παισὶ καὶ περὶ παλαίστραν καὶ μουσικὴν, εξ ὧν ἀμφοτέρων ἐστε. φανώθη . . . Φιλαθηνωίοτατος καὶ θεοφιλής.*—SCHOLIAST.

[2] Except Beaumont and Fletcher.

[3] Hartley Coleridge, in his *Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*, says of Massinger's father: 'We are not certified in the situation which he held in the noble household (Earl of Pembroke) but we may be sure that it was neither menial nor mean. Service in those days was not derogatory to gentle birth'—TR.

them to exhaustion, poverty, and death. Men received enjoyment from them. and neglected and despised them. One actor, for a political allusion, was sent to prison, and only just escaped losing his ears; great men, men in office, abused them like servants. Heywood, who played almost every day, bound himself, in addition, to write a sheet daily, composes wretchedly in the taverns, labours and sweats like a true literary hack, and dies leaving two hundred and twenty pieces, of which most are lost. Kyd, one of the first, died in misery. Shirley, one of the last, at the end of his career, was obliged to become again a schoolmaster. Massinger dies unknown; and in the parish register we find only this sad mention of him: 'Philip Massinger, a stranger.' A few months after the death of Middleton, his widow was obliged to ask alms of the City, because he had left nothing. Imagination, as Drummond said of Ben Jonson, oppressed their reason; it is the common failing of poets. They wish to enjoy, and give themselves wholly up to enjoyments; their mood, their heart governs them; in their life, as in their works, impulses are irresistible; desire comes suddenly, like a wave, drowning reason, resistance—often even giving neither reason nor resistance time to show themselves.[1] Many are roysterers, sad roysterers of the same sort, as Musset and Murger, who give themselves up to every passion, and shake off restraint; capable of the purest and most poetic dreams, of the most delicate and touching tenderness, and who yet can only undermine their health and mar their glory. Such are Nash, Decker, and Greene; Nash, a fanciful satirist, who abused his talent, and conspired like a prodigal against good fortune; Decker, who passed three years in the King's Bench prison; Greene, above all, a pleasing wit, rich, graceful, who gave himself up to all pleasures, publicly with tears confessing his vices,[2] and the next moment plunging into them again. These are mere andrœgynes, simple courtesans, in manners, body, and heart. Quitting Cambridge, 'with good fellows as free-living as himself,' Greene had travelled over Spain, Italy, 'in which places he sawe and practizde such villainie as is abhominable to declare.' You see the poor man is candid, not sparing himself; he is natural; passionate in everything, repentance or otherwise; eminently inconstant; made for self-contradiction, not self-correction. On his return he became, in London, a supporter of taverns, a haunter of evil places. In his *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* he says:

[1] See, amongst others, *The Woman Killed with Kindness*, by Heywood. Mrs. Frankfort, so upright of heart, accepts Wendoll at his first offer. Sir Francis Acton, at the sight of her whom he wishes to dishonour, and whom he hates, falls 'into an ecstasy,' and dreams of nothing save marriage. Compare the sudden transport of Juliet, Romeo, Macbeth, Miranda, etc.; the counsel of Prospero to Fernando, when he leaves him alone for a moment with Miranda.

[2] Compare *La Vie de Bohême* and *Les Nuits d'Hiver*, by Murger: *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, by A. de Musset

'I was dround in pride, whoredom was my daily exercise, and gluttony with drunkenness was my onely delight. . . . After I had wholly betaken me to the penning of plaies (which was my continuall exercise), I was so far from calling upon God that I sildome thought on God, but tooke such delight in swearing and blaspheming the name of God that none could thinke otherwise of me than that I was the child of perdition. These vanities and other trifling pamphlets I penned of love and vaine fantasies was my chiefest stay of living; and for those my vaine discourses I was beloved of the more vainer sort of people, who being my continuall companions, came still to my lodging, and there would continue quaffing, carowsing, and surfeting with me all the day long. . . . If I may have my disire while I live I am satisfied; let me shift after death as I may. . . . "Hell!" quoth I; "what talke you of hell to me? I know if I once come there I shall have the company of better men than myselfe; I shal also meete with some madde knaves in that place, and so long as I shall not sit there alone, my care is the lesse. . . . If I feared the judges of the bench no more than I dread the judgments of God, I would before I slept dive into one carles bagges or other, and make merrie with the shelles I found in them so long as they would last."'

A little later he is seized with remorse, marries, depicts in delicious lines the regularity and calm of an upright life; then returns to London, devours his property and his wife's fortune with 'a sorry ragged queane,' in the company of ruffians, pimps, sharpers, courtesans; drinking, blaspheming, wearing himself out by sleepless nights and orgies; writing for bread sometimes amid the brawling and effluvia of his wretched lodging, lighting upon thoughts of adoration and love, worthy of Rolla;[1] very often disgusted with himself, seized with a fit of weeping between two alehouses, and writing little pieces to accuse himself, to regret his wife, to convert his comrades, or to warn young people against the tricks of prostitutes and swindlers. By this process he was soon worn out; six years were enough to exhaust him. An indigestion arising from Rhenish wine and pickled herrings finished him. If it had not been for his hostess, who succoured him, he 'would have perished in the streets.' He lasted a little longer, and then his light went out; now and then he begged her 'pitifully for a penny pott of malmesie;' he was covered with lice, he had but one shirt, and when his own was 'a washing,' he was obliged to borrow her husband's. 'His doublet and hose and sword were sold for three shillinges,' and the poor folks paid the cost of his burial, four shillings for the winding-sheet, and six and fourpence for the burial. In such low places, on such dunghills, amid such excesses and violence, dramatic genius forced its way, and amongst others, that of the first, of the most powerful, of the true founder of the dramatic school, Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe was an ill-regulated, dissolute, outrageously vehement and audacious spirit, but grand and sombre, with the genuine poetic frenzy; pagan moreover, and rebellious in manners and creed. In this universal return to the senses, and in this impulse of natural forces which brought on the Renaissance, the corporeal instincts and the ideas

[1] The hero of one of Alfred de Musset's poems.—TR.

which give them their warrant, break forth impetuously. Marlowe, like Greene, like Kett,[1] is a sceptic, denies God and Christ, blasphemes the Trinity, declares Moses 'a juggler,' Christ more worthy of death than Barabbas, says that 'yf he wer to write a new religion, he wolde undertake both a more excellent and more admirable methode,' and 'almost in every company he commeth, perswadeth men to Athiesme.'[2] Such were the rages, the rashnesses, the excesses which liberty of thought gave rise to in these new minds, who for the first time, after so many centuries, dared to walk unfettered. From his father's shop, crowded with children, from the stirrups and awls, he found himself at Cambridge, probably through the patronage of a great man, and on his return to London, in want, amid the licence of the green-room, the low houses and taverns, his head was in a ferment, and his passions were heated. He turned actor; but having broken his leg in a scene of debauchery, he remained lame, and could no longer appear on the boards. He openly avowed his infidelity, and a prosecution was begun, which, if time had not failed, would probably have brought him to the stake. He made love to a drab, and trying to stab his rival, his hand was turned, so that his own blade entered his eye and his brain, and he died, still cursing and blaspheming. He was only thirty years old. Think what poetry could emanate from a life so passionate, and occupied in such a manner! First, exaggerated declamation, heaps of murder, atrocities, a pompous and furious display of tragedy soaked in blood, and passions raised to a pitch of madness. All the foundations of the English stage, *Ferrex and Porrex*, *Cambyses*, *Hieronymo*, even the *Pericles* of Shakspeare, reach the same height of extravagance, force, and horror.[3] It is the first outbreak of youth. Recall Schiller's *Robbers*, and how modern democracy has recognised for the first time its picture in the metaphors and cries of Charles Moor.[4] So here the characters struggle and jostle, stamp on the earth, gnash their teeth, shake their fists against heaven. The trumpets sound, the drums beat, coats of mail file past, armies clash together, men stab each other, or themselves; speeches are full of gigantic threats or lyrical figures;[5]

[1] Burnt in 1589.

[2] The translator always refers to Marlowe's *Works*, ed. Dyce, 3 vols., 1850. Append. i. vol. 3.

[3] See especially *Titus Andronicus*, attributed to Shakspeare: there are parricides, mothers whom they cause to eat their children, a young girl who appears on the stage violated, with her tongue and hands cut off.

[4] The chief character in Schiller's *Robbers*, a virtuous brigand and redresser of wrongs.—Tr.

[5] For in a field, whose superficies
Is cover'd with a liquid purple veil,
And sprinkled with the brains of slaughter'd men
My royal chair of state shall be advanc'd;
And he that means to place himself therein,

kings die, straining a bass voice; 'now doth ghastly death with greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart, and like a harpy tires on my life.' The hero in *Tamburlaine the Great*[1] is seated on a chariot drawn by chained kings, burns towns, drowns women and children, puts men to the sword, and finally, seized with an invisible sickness, raves in monstrous outcries against the gods, whose hands afflict his soul, and whom he would fain dethrone. There already is the picture of senseless pride, of blind and murderous rage, which passing through many devastations, at last arms against heaven itself. The overflowing of savage and immoderate instinct produces this mighty sounding verse, this prodigality of carnage, this display of overloaded splendours and colours, this railing of demoniac passions, this audacity of grand impiety. If in the dramas which succeed it, *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Jew of Malta*, the bombast decreases, the violence remains. Barabas the Jew, maddened with hate, is thenceforth no longer human; he has been treated by the Christians like a beast, and he hates them like a beast. He advises his servant Ithamore in the following words:

'Hast thou no trade? then listen to my words,
And I will teach thee that shall stick by thee:
First, be thou void of these affections,
Compassion, love, vain hope, and heartless fear;
Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pity none,
But to thyself smile when the Christians moan.
. . . I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls:
Sometimes I go about and poison wells. . . .
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practise first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in ure
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells. . . .
I fill'd the jails with bankrouts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals;
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll
How I with interest tormented him.'[2]

Must armed wade up to the chin in blood. . . .
And I would strive to swim through pools of blood,
Or make a bridge of murder'd carcasses,
Whose arches should be fram'd with bones of Turks,
Ere I would lose the title of a king.—*Tamburlaine*, part ii. i. 3.

[1] The editor of Marlowe's *Works*, Pickering, 1826, says in his Introduction: 'Both the matter and style of *Tamburlaine*, however, differ materially from Marlowe's other compositions, and doubts have more than once been suggested as to whether the play was properly assigned to him. We think that Marlowe did not write it.' Dyce is of a contrary opinion.—TR.

[2] Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, ii. p. 275 *et passim*.

All these cruelties he boasts of and chuckles over, like a demon who rejoices in being a good executioner, and plunges his victims in the very extremity of anguish. His daughter has two Christian suitors; and by forged letters he causes them to slay each other. In despair she takes the veil, and to avenge himself he poisons his daughter and the whole convent. Two friars wish to denounce him, then to convert him; he strangles the first, and jokes with his slave Ithamore, a cut-throat by profession, who loves his trade, rubs his hands with joy, and says:

'Pull amain,
'Tis neatly done, sir; here's no print at all.
So, let him lean upon his staff; excellent! he stands as if
he were begging of bacon.'[1]
'O mistress, I have the bravest, gravest, secret, subtle, bottle-
nosed knave to my master, that ever gentleman had.'[2]

The second friar comes up, and they accuse him of the murder:

'*Barabas.* Heaven bless me! what, a friar a murderer!
When shall you see a Jew commit the like?
Ithamore. Why, a Turk could ha' done no more.
Bar. To-morrow is the sessions; you shall to it—
Come Ithamore, let's help to take him hence.
Friar. Villains, I am a sacred person; touch me not.
Bar. The law shall touch you; we'll but lead you, we:
'Las, I could weep at your calamity!'[3]

Add to that two other poisonings, an infernal machine to blow up the Turkish garrison, a plot to cast the Turkish commander in a well. Barabas falls into it himself, and dies in the hot cauldron,[4] howling, hardened, remorseless, having but one regret, that he had not done evil enough. These are the ferocities of the middle-age; we might find them to this day among the companions of Ali Pacha, among the pirates of the Archipelago; we retain pictures of them in the paintings of the fifteenth century, which represent a king with his court, seated calmly round a living man who is being flayed; in the midst the flayer on his knees is working conscientiously, very careful not to spoil the skin.[5]

All this is rough work, you will say; these people kill too readily, and too quickly. It is on this very account that the painting is a true one. For the specialty of the men of the time, as of Marlowe's characters, is the abrupt commission of a deed; they are children, robust children. As a horse kicks out instead of speaking, so they pull out their knives instead of an explanation. Nowadays we hardly know what nature is; we still keep in its place the benevolent prejudices of the eighteenth century; we only see it humanised by two centuries of culture, and we take its acquired calm for an innate moderation. The foundation of the natural man are irresistible impulses, passions, desires,

[1] *The Jew of Malta*, iv. p. 311. [2] *Ibid.* iii. p. 291. [3] *Ibid.* iv. p. 313.
[4] Up to this time, in England, poisoners were cast into a boiling cauldron.
[5] In the Museum of Ghent.

greeds; all blind. He sees a woman,[1] thinks her beautiful; suddenly he rushes towards her; people try to restrain him, he kills these people, gluts his passion, then thinks no more of it, save when at times a vague picture of a moving lake of blood crosses his brain and makes him gloomy. Sudden and extreme resolves are confused in his mind with desire; barely conceived of, the thing is done; the wide interval which a Frenchman places between the idea of an action and the action itself is not to be found here.[2] Barabas conceived murders, and straightway murders were accomplished; there is no deliberation, no pricks of conscience; that is how he commits a score of them; his daughter leaves him, he becomes unnatural, and poisons her; his confidential servant betrays him, he disguises himself, and poisons him. Rage seizes these men like a fit, and then they are forced to kill. Benvenuto Cellini relates how, being offended, he tried to restrain himself, but was nearly suffocated; and that he might not die of the torments, he rushed with his dagger upon his opponent. So, in *Edward II.*, the nobles immediately appeal to arms; all is excessive and unforeseen; between two replies the heart is turned upside down, transported to the extremes of hate or tenderness. Edward, seeing his favourite Gaveston again, pours out before him his treasure, casts his dignities at his feet, gives him his seal, himself, and, on a threat from the Bishop of Coventry, suddenly cries:

> 'Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,
> And in the channel christen him anew.'[3]

Then, when the queen supplicates:

> 'Fawn not on me, French strumpet! get thee gone . . .'
> Speak not unto her: let her droop and pine.'[4]

Furies and hatreds clash together like horsemen in a battle. The Duke of Lancaster draws his sword on Gaveston to slay him, before the king; Mortimer wounds Gaveston. These powerful loud voices growl; the noblemen will not even let a dog approach the prince, and rob them of their rank. Lancaster says of Gaveston:

> '. . . He comes not back,
> Unless the sea cast up his shipwrack'd body.
> *Warwick.* And to behold so sweet a sight as that,
> There's none here but would run his horse to death.'[5]

They have seized Gaveston, and intend to hang him 'at a bough;' they refuse to let him speak a single minute with the king. In vain they

[1] See in the *Jew of Malta* the seduction of Ithamore, by Bellamira, a rough, but truly admirable picture.

[2] Nothing could be falser than Schiller's *William Tell*, his hesitation and arguments; for a contrast, see Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*. In 1377, Wiclif pleaded in St. Paul's before the Bishop of London, and that raised a quarrel. The Duke of Lancaster, Wiclif's protector, 'threatened to drag the bishop out of the church by the hair;' and next day the furious crowd sacked the duke's palace. *Pict. Hist.* i. 780.

[3] Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, i. p. 173. [4] *Ibid.* p. 186. [5] *Ibid.* p. 188

are entreated; when they do at last consent, they recall their promise; it is a prey they want immediately, and Warwick, seizing him by force, 'strake off his head in a trench.' Those are the men of the middle-age. They have the fierceness, the rage, the pride of big, well-fed, thorough-bred bull-dogs. It is this sternness and impetuosity of primitive passions which produced the Wars of the Roses, and for thirty years drove the nobles on each other's swords and to the block.

What is there beyond all these frenzies and gluttings of blood? The idea of crushing necessity and inevitable ruin in which everything sinks and comes to an end. Mortimer, brought to the block, says with a smile:

> 'Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
> There is a point, to which when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong down: that point I touch'd,
> And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?—
> Farewell, fair queen; weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown.'[1]

Weigh well these grand words; they are a cry from the heart, the profound confession of Marlowe, as also of Byron, and of the old sea-kings. The northern paganism is fully expressed in this heroic and mournful sigh; it is thus they imagine the world so long as they remain on the outside of Christianity, or as soon as they quit it. So also, when they see in life but a battle of unchecked passions, and in death but a gloomy sleep, perhaps filled with mournful dreams, there is no other supreme good but a day of joy and victory. They glut themselves, shutting their eyes to the issue, except that they may be swallowed up on the morrow. That is the master-thought of *Doctor Faustus*, the greatest of Marlowe's dramas; to satisfy his soul, no matter at what price, or with what results:

> 'A sound magician is a mighty god. . . .
> How I am glutted with conceit of this! . . .
> I'll have them fly to India for gold,
> Ransack the ocean for orient pearl. . . .
> I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
> And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;
> I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
> And make swift Rhine circle fair Wertenberg. . . .
> Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
> Like Almain rutters with their horsemen's staves,
> Or Lapland giants, trotting by our sides;
> Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
> Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
> Than have the white breasts of the queen of love.'[2]

[1] *Edward the Second*, last scene, p. 288.

[2] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, i. p. 9 *et passim*.

What brilliant dreams, what desires, what vast or voluptuous wishes, worthy of a Roman Cæsar or an eastern poet, eddy in this teeming brain! To satiate them, to obtain four-and-twenty years of power, Faustus gives his soul, without fear, without need of temptation, at the first outset, voluntarily, so sharp is the prick within:

> 'Had I as many souls as there be stars,
> I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.
> By him I'll be great emperor of the world,
> And make a bridge thorough the moving air. . . .
> Why shouldst thou not? Is not thy soul thy own?'[1]

And with that he gives himself full swing: he wants to know everything, to have everything; a book in which he can behold all herbs and trees which grow upon the earth; another in which shall be drawn all the constellations and planets; another which shall bring him gold when he wills it, and 'the fairest courtezans;' another which summons 'men in armour' ready to execute his commands, and which holds 'thunder, whirlwinds, thunder and lightning' chained at his disposal He is like a child, he stretches out his hands for everything shining; then grieves to think of hell, then lets himself be diverted by shows:

> '*Faustus.* O, this feeds my soul!
> *Lucifer.* Tut, Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight.
> *Faustus.* Oh, might I see hell, and return again,
> How happy were I then!' . . .[2]

He is conducted, being invisible, over the whole world; lastly to Rome, amongst the ceremonies of the Pope's court. Like a schoolboy during a holiday, he has insatiable eyes, he forgets everything before a pageant, he amuses himself in playing tricks, in giving the Pope a box on the ear, in beating the monks, in performing magic tricks before princes, finally in drinking, feasting, filling his belly, deadening his thoughts. In his transport he becomes an atheist, and says there is no hell, that those are 'old wives' tales.' Then suddenly the sad idea knocks at the gates of his brain:

> 'I will renounce this magic and repent . . .
> My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent;
> Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
> But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears,
> "Faustus, thou art damn'd!" then swords, and knives,
> Poison, guns, halters, and envenom'd steel
> Are laid before me to despatch myself,
> Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair,
> Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death?
> And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
> With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
> Made music with my Mephistophilis?
> Why should I die, then, or basely despair?

[1] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, i. pp. 22, 29. [2] *Ibid.* p. 43.

I am resolv'd ; Faustus shall ne'er repent.—
Come Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,
And argue of divine astrology.
Tell me, are there many heavens above the moon ?
Are all celestial bodies but one globe,
As is the substance of this centric earth ? . . .'[1]
'One thing . . . let me crave of thee
To glut the longing of my heart's desire. . . .
Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium ?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss !
Her lips suck forth my soul : see, where it flies !—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena. . . .
O thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars !'[2]

'Ah, my God, I would weep ! but the devil draws in my tears. Gush forth blood, instead of tears ! yea, life and soul ! Oh, he stays my tongue ! I would lift up my hands ; but see, they hold them, they hold them ; Lucifer and Mephistophilis.' . . .[3]

'Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually !
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come. . . .
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
Oh, I'll leap up to my God !—Who pulls me down ?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament !
One drop would save my soul, half a drop : ah, my Christ,
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ !
Yet will I call on him. . . .
Ah, half the hour is past ! 'twill all be past anon. . . .
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd. . . .
It strikes, it strikes. . . .
Oh soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found ! '[4]

There is the living, struggling, natural, personal man, not the philosophic type which Goethe has created, but a primitive and genuine man, hot-headed, fiery, the slave of his passions, the sport of his dreams, wholly engrossed in the present, moulded by his lusts, contradictions, and follies, who amidst noise and starts, cries of pleasure and anguish, rolls, knowing it and willing it, down the slope and crags of his precipice. The whole English drama is here, as a plant in its seed, and Marlowe is to Shakspeare what Perugino was to Raphael.

[1] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 37. [2] *Ibid.* p. 75. [3] *Ibid.* p. 78. [4] *Ibid.* p. 80

V.

Insensibly art is being formed; and toward the close of the century it is complete. Shakspeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Jonson, Webster, Massinger, Ford, Middleton, Heywood, appear together, or close upon each other, a new and favoured generation, flourishing largely in the soil fertilised by the efforts of the generation which preceded them. Thenceforth the scenes are developed and assume consistency; the characters cease to move by clockwork, the drama is no longer like a piece of statuary. The poet who just before knew only how to strike or kill, introduces now a sequence of situation and a rationale in intrigue. He begins to prepare the way for sentiments, to forewarn us of events, to combine effects, and we find a theatre at last, the most complete, the most life-like, and also the most strange that ever existed.

We must follow its formation, and regard the drama on the ground where it was formed, namely, in the mind of its authors. What was going on in these minds? What sorts of ideas were born there, and how were they born? In the first place, they see the event, whatever it be, and they see it as it is; I mean that they have it within themselves, with its persons and details, beautiful and ugly, even dull and grotesque. If it is a trial, the judge is there, in their minds, in such a place, with his physiognomy and his warts; the pleader in such a place, with his spectacles and brief-bag; the accused is opposite, stooping and remorseful; each with his friends, cobblers, or lords; then the buzzing crowd behind, all with their grinning faces, their astonished or kindling eyes.[1] It is a genuine trial which they imagine, a trial like those they have seen before the justice, where they cried or shouted as witnesses or interested parties, with their quibbling terms, their pros and cons, the scribblings, the sharp voices of the counsel, the stamping of feet, the crowding, the smell of their fellow-men, and so forth. The endless myriads of circumstances which accompany and obscure every event, crowd round that event in their heads, and not merely the externals, that is, the sensible and picturesque traits, the particular colours and costumes, but also, and chiefly, the internals, that is, the motions of anger and joy, the secret tumult of the soul, the ebb and flow of ideas and passions which darken the face, swell the veins, and make the teeth grind, the fists clench, which urge or restrain a man. They see all the details, the tides that sway a man, one from without, another from within, one over another, one within another, both together without faltering and without ceasing. And what is this vision but sympathy, an imitative sympathy, which puts us in another's place, which carries over their agitations to our own breasts, which makes our life a little world, able to reproduce the great one in abstract? Like the characters they imagine, poets and spectators

[1] See the trial of Vittoria Corombona, of Virginia in Webster, of Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar in Shakspeare.

make gestures, raise their voices, act. No speech or story can show their inner mood, but it is the getting up of the play which can manifest it. As some men find language for their ideas, so these act and mimic them; theatrical and figured representation is their genuine speech: all other expression, the lyrical song of Æschylus, the reflective symbolism of Goethe, the oratorical development of Racine, would be impossible for them. Involuntarily, instantaneously, without forecast, they cut life into scenes, and carry it in pieces on the boards; this goes so far, that often a mere character becomes an actor,[1] playing a part within a part; the scenic faculty is the natural form of their mind. Under the effort of this instinct, all the accessory parts of the drama come before the footlights and expand under our eyes. A battle has been fought; instead of relating it, they bring it before the public, trumpets and drums, mingling crowds, slaughtering combatants. A shipwreck happens; straightway the ship is before the spectator, with the sailors' oaths, the technical orders of the helmsman. Of all the details of human life,[2] tavern-racket and statesmen's councils, scullion jests and court processions, domestic tenderness and pandering,—none is too small or too high: these things exist in life—let them exist on the stage, each in full, in the rough, atrocious, or absurd, just as it is, no matter how. Neither in Greece, nor Italy, nor Spain, nor France, has an art been seen which tried so boldly to express the soul, with the soul's most intimate relations—the truth, and the whole truth.

How did they succeed, and what is this new art which confounds all ordinary rules? It is an art for all that, since it is natural; a great art, since it embraces more things, and that more deeply than others do, like the art of Rembrandt and Rubens; but like theirs, it is a Teutonic art, and one whose every step is in contrast with these of classical art. What the Greeks and Romans, the originators of the latter, sought in everything, was propriety and order, monuments, statues and paintings, the theatre, eloquence and poetry: from Sophocles to Racine, they shaped all their work in the same mould, and attained beauty by the same method. In the infinite entanglement and complexity of things, they grasped a small number of simple ideas, which they embraced in a small number of simple representations, so that the vast confused vegetation of life is presented to the mind from that time forth, pruned and reduced, and perhaps easily embraced by a single glance. A square of walls with rows of similar columns; a symmetrical group of draped or undraped forms; a young upright man raising one arm; a wounded warrior who will not return to the camp, though they beseech him: this, in their noblest epoch, was their architecture, their painting, their sculpture, and their theatre. No poetry but a few sentiments slightly complex, always natural, not toned down, intelligible to

[1] Falstaff in Shakspeare; the queen in *London*, by Greene and Decker; Rosalind in Shakspeare.

[2] In Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* there is an admirable accouchement scene

all; no eloquence but a continuous argument, a limited vocabulary, the loftiest ideas brought down to their sensible origin, so that children can understand such eloquence and feel such poetry; and in this sense they are classical.[1] In the hands of Frenchmen, the last inheritors of the simple art, these great legacies of antiquity undergo no change. If poetic genius is less, the structure of mind has not altered. Racine puts on the stage a unique action, whose details he proportions, and whose course he regulates; no incident, nothing unforeseen, no appendices or incongruities; no secondary intrigue. The subordinate parts are effaced; at the most four or five principal characters, the fewest possible; the rest, reduced to the condition of confidants, take the tone of their masters, and merely reply to them. All the scenes are held together, and flow insensibly one into the other; and every scene, like the entire piece, has its order and progress. The tragedy is detached symmetrically and clear from the midst of human life, like a complete and solitary temple which limns its regular outline on the luminous azure of the sky. In England all is different. All that the French call proportion and fitness is wanting; Englishmen do not trouble themselves about them, they do not need them. There is no unity; they leap suddenly over twenty years, or five hundred leagues. There are twenty scenes in an act—we stumble without preparation from one to the other, from tragedy to buffoonery; usually it appears as though the action gained no ground; the characters waste their time in conversation, dreaming, expanding their parts. We were moved, anxious for the issue, and here they bring us in quarrelling servants, lovers making poetry. Even the dialogue and speeches, which one would think ought particularly to be of a regular and contained flow of engrossing ideas, remain stagnant, or are scattered in windings and deviations. At first sight we fancy we are not advancing, we do not feel at every phrase that we have made a step. There are none of those solid pleadings, none of those probing discussions, which moment by moment add reason to reason, objection to objection; one would say that they only knew how to scold, to repeat themselves, and to mark time. And the disorder is as great in general as in particular things. They heap a whole reign, a complete war, an entire novel, into a drama; they cut up into scenes an English chronicle or an Italian novel: to this their art is reduced; the events matter little; whatever they are, they accept them. They have no idea of progressive and unique action. Two or three actions connected endwise, or entangled one within another, two or three incomplete endings badly contrived, and opened up again; no machinery but death, scattered right and left and unforeseen: such is the logic of their method. The fact is, that our logic, the Latin, fails them. Their mind does not march

[1] This is, in fact, the English view of the French mind, which is doubtless a refinement, many times refined, of the classical spirit. But M. Taine has seemingly not taken into account such products as the Medea on the one hand, and the works of Aristophanes and the Latin sensualists on the other.—Tr.

by the smooth and straightforward paths of rhetoric and eloquence. It reaches the same end, but by other approaches. It is at once more comprehensive and less regular than ours. It demands a conception more complete, but less consecutive. It proceeds, not as with us, by a line of uniform steps, but by sudden leaps and long pauses. It does not rest satisfied with a simple idea drawn from a complex fact, but exacts the complex fact entire, with its numberless particularities, its interminable ramifications. It would see in man not a general passion — ambition, anger, or love; not a pure quality—happiness, avarice, folly; but a character, that is, the imprint, wonderfully complicated, which inheritance, temperament, education, calling, the age, society, conversation, habits, have stamped on every man; an incommunicable and individual imprint, which, once stamped in a man, is not found again in any other. It would see in the hero not only the hero, but the individual, with his manner of walking, drinking, swearing, blowing his nose; with the tone of his voice, whether he is thin or fat;[1] and thus plunges to the bottom of things, with every look, as by a miner's deep shaft. This sunk, it little cares whether the second shaft be two paces or a hundred from the first; enough that it reaches the same depth, and serves equally well to display the inner and invisible layer. Logic is here from beneath, not from above. It is the unity of a character which binds the two acts of a person, as the unity of an impression connects the two scenes of a drama. To speak exactly, the spectator is like a man whom one should lead along a wall pierced at separate intervals with little windows; at every window he catches for an instant a glimpse of a new landscape, with its million details: the walk over, if he is of Latin race and training, he finds a medley of images jostling in his head, and asks for a map that he may recollect himself; if he is of German race and training, he perceives as a whole, by a natural concentration, the wide country of which he has only seen the fragments. Such a conception, by the multitude of details which it has combined, and by the length of the vistas which it embraces, is a half-vision which shakes the soul. What these works are about to show us is, with what energy, what disdain of contrivance, what vehemence of truth, it dares to smite and hammer the human medal; with what liberty it is able to reproduce the full prominence of indistinct characters, and the extreme flights of virgin nature.

VI.

Let us consider the different personages which this art, so suited to depict real manners, and so apt to paint the living soul, goes in search of amidst the real manners and the living souls of its time and country. They are of two kinds, as befits nature and the drama: one which pro-

[1] See *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Hotspur*. The queen in *Hamlet* (v. 2) says: 'He (Hamlet)'s fat, and scant of breath.'

duces terror, the other which produces pity; these graceful and feminine, those manly and violent. All the differences of sex, all the extremes of life, all the resources of the stage, are embraced in this contrast; and if ever there was a complete contrast, it is here.

The reader must study for himself some of these pieces, or he will have no idea of the fury into which the stage is hurled; force and transport are driven every instant to the point of atrocity, and further still, if there is any further. Assassinations, poisonings, tortures, outcries of madness and rage; no passion and no suffering are too extreme for their energy or their effort. Anger is with them a madness, ambition a frenzy, love a delirium. Hippolyto, who has lost his mistress, says, 'Were thine eyes clear as mine, thou might'st behold her, watching upon yon battlements of stars, how I observe them.'[1] Aretus, to be avenged on Valentinian, poisons him after poisoning himself, and with the death-rattle in his throat, is brought to his enemy's side, to give him a foretaste of agony. Queen Brunhalt has panders with her on the stage, and causes her two sons to slay each other. Death everywhere; at the close of every play, all the great people wade in blood: with slaughter and butcheries, the stage becomes a field of battle or a burial-ground.[2] Shall I describe a few of these tragedies? In the *Duke of Milan*, Francesco, to avenge his sister, who has been seduced, wishes to seduce in his turn the Duchess Marcelia, wife of Sforza, the seducer; he desires her, he will have her; he says to her, with cries of love and rage:

> 'For with this arm I'll swim through seas of blood,
> Or make a bridge, arch'd with the bones of men,
> But I will grasp my aims in you, my dearest,
> Dearest, and best of women!'[3]

For he wishes to strike the duke through her, whether she lives or dies, if not by dishonour, at least by murder; the first is as good as the second, nay better, for so he will do a greater injury. He calumniates her, and the duke, who adores her, kills her; then, being undeceived, becomes a madman, will not believe she is dead, has the body brought in, kneels before it, rages and weeps. He knows now the name of the traitor, and at the thought of him he swoons or raves:

> 'I'll follow him to hell, but I will find him,
> And then live a fourth Fury to torment him.
> Then, for this cursed hand and arm that guided
> The wicked steel, I'll have them, joint by joint,
> With burning irons sear'd off, which I will eat,
> I being a vulture fit to taste such carrion.'[4]

Suddenly his speech is stopped, and he falls; Francesco has poisoned

[1] Middleton, *The Honest Whore*, Part i. iv. 1.

[2] Beaumont and Fletcher, *Valentinian*, *Thierry and Theodoret*. See Massinger's *Picture*, which resembles Musset's *Barberine*. Its crudity, the extraordinary and repulsive energy, will show the difference of the two ages.

[3] Massinger's Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859, *Duke of Milan*, ii. 1. [4] *Ibid.* v. 2

him. The duke dies, and the murderer is led to torture. There are worse scenes than this; to find sentiments strong enough, they go to those which change the nature of man. Massinger puts on the stage a father who judges and condemns his daughter, stabbed by her husband; Webster and Ford, a son who assassinates his mother; Ford, the incestuous loves of a brother and sister.[1] Irresistible love overtakes them; the ancient love of Pasiphaë and Myrrha, a kind of madness-like enchantment, and beneath which the will entirely gives way. Giovanni says:

'Lost! I am lost! My fates have doom'd my death!
The more I strive, I love; the more I love,
The less I hope: I see my ruin certain. . . .
I have even wearied heaven with pray'rs, dried up
The spring of my continual tears, even starv'd
My veins with daily fasts: what wit or art
Could counsel, I have practised; but, alas!
I find all these but dreams, and old men's tales,
To fright unsteady youth: I am still the same;
Or I must speak, or burst.'[2]

What transports follow! what fierce and bitter joys, and how short too, how grievous and crossed with anguish, especially for her! She is married to another. Read for yourself the admirable and horrible scene which represents the wedding night. She is pregnant, and Soranzo, the husband, drags her along the ground, with curses, demanding the name of her lover:

'Come strumpet, famous whore! . . .
Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain'st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I?
Must your hot itch and pleurisy of lust,
The heyday of your luxury, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be pick'd out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports?—Now I must be the dad
To all that gallimaufry that is stuff'd
In thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb?
Why, must I?
Annabella. Beastly man! why?—'tis thy fate.
I sued not to thee. . . .
S. Tell me by whom.'[3]

She gets excited, feels and cares for nothing more, refuses to tell the name of her lover, and praises him in the following words:

[1] Massinger, *The Fatal Dowry;* Webster and Ford, *A late Murther of the Sonne upon the Mother* (a play not extant); Ford, *'Tis pity she's a Whore.* See also Ford's *Broken Heart* with its sublime scenes of agony and madness.

[2] Ford's Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859, *'Tis pity she's a Whore,* i. 3.

[3] *Ibid.* iv. 3.

'*A.* Soft, 'twas not in my bargain.
Yet somewhat, sir, to stay your longing stomach
I am content t' acquaint you with: the Man,
The more than man, that got this sprightly boy,—
(For 'tis a boy, and therefore glory, sir,
Your heir shall be a son.)
S. Damnable monster!
A. Nay, an you will not hear, I'll speak no more.
S. Yes, speak, and speak thy last.
A. A match, a match! . . .
You, why you are not worthy once to name
His name without true worship, or indeed,
Unless you kneel'd, to hear another name him.
S. What was he call'd?
A. We are not come to that;
Let it suffice that you shall have the glory
To father what so brave a father got. . . .
S. Dost thou laugh?
Come, whore, tell me your lover, or by truth
I'll hew thy flesh to shreds; who is't?'[1]

She laughs; the excess of shame and terror has given her courage; she insults him, she sings; so like a woman!

'*A.* (Sings.) *Che morte piu dolce che morire per amore.*
S. Thus will I pull thy hair, and thus I'll drag
Thy lust be-leper'd body through the dust. . . .
(*Hales her up and down.*)
A. Be a gallant hangman. . . .
I leave revenge behind, and thou shalt feel it. . . .
(*To Vasquez.*) Pish, do not beg for me, I prize my life
As nothing; if the man will needs be mad,
Why, let him take it.'[2]

In the end all is discovered, and the two lovers know they must die. For the last time, they see each other in Annabella's chamber, listening to the noise of the feast below which shall serve for their funeral-feast. Giovanni, who has made his resolve like a madman, sees Annabella richly dressed, dazzling. He regards her in silence, and remembers the past. He weeps, and says:

'These are the funeral tears,
Shed on your grave; these furrow'd up my cheeks
When first I lov'd and knew not how to woo. . . .
Give me your hand: how sweetly life doth run
In these well-colour'd veins! How constantly
These palms do promise health! . . .
Kiss me again, forgive me. . . . Farewell.'[3] . . .

He then stabs her, enters the banqueting room, with her heart upon his dagger:

[1] '*Tis pity she's a Whore*, iv. 3. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* v. 5

'Soranzo, see this heart, which was thy wife's.
Thus I exchange it royally for thine.'[1]

He kills him, and casting himself on the swords of banditti, dies. It would seem that tragedy could go no further.

But it did go further; for if these are melodramas, they are sincere, composed, not like those of to-day, by Grub Street writers for peaceful citizens, but by impassioned men, experienced in tragical arts, for a violent, over-fed, melancholy race. From Shakspeare to Milton, Swift, Hogarth, no race has been more glutted with crudities and horrors, and its poets supply them plentifully; Ford less so than Webster; the latter a sombre man, whose thoughts seem incessantly to be haunting tombs and charnel-houses. 'Places in court,' he says, 'are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower.'[2] Such are his images. No one has equalled Webster in creating desperate characters, utter wretches, bitter misanthropes,[3] in blackening and blaspheming human life, above all, in depicting the shameless depravity and refined ferocity of Italian manners.[4] The Duchess of Malfi has secretly married her steward Antonio, and her brother learns that she has children; almost mad[5] with rage and wounded pride, he remains silent, waiting until he knows the name of the father; then he arrives, means to kill her, but so that she shall taste the lees of death. She must suffer much, but above all she must not die too quickly! She must suffer in mind; these griefs are worse than the body's. He sends assassins to kill Antonio, and meanwhile comes to her in the dark, with affectionate words; pretends to be reconciled, and suddenly shows her waxen figures, covered with wounds, whom she takes for her slaughtered husband and children. She staggers under the blow and remains in gloom, without crying out. Then she says:

'Good comfortable fellow,
Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel
To have all his bones new set; entreat him live
To be executed again. Who must despatch me? . . .

[1] *'Tis pity she's a Whore*, v. 6.

[1] Webster's Works, ed. Dyce, 1857, *Duchess of Malfi*, i. 1.

[2] The characters of Bosola, Flaminio.

[4] See Stendhal *The Chronicles of Italy, The Cenci, The Duchess of Palliano* and all the biographies of the time: of the Borgias, of Bianca Capello, of Vittoria Accoramboni, etc.

[5] Ferdinand, one of the brothers, says (ii. 5):

'I would have their bodies
Burnt in a coal-pit with the ventage stopp'd
That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to heaven;
Or dip the sheets they lie in, in pitch or sulphur,
Wrap them in't, and then light them as a match;
Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis,
And giv't his lecherous father to renew
The sin of his back.'

Bosola. Come, be of comfort, I will save your life.
Duchess. Indeed, I have not leisure to tend so small a business.
B. Now, by my life, I pity you.
D. Thou art a fool, then,
To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched
As cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers.'[1] . . .

Slow words, spoken in a constrained voice, as in a dream, or as if she were speaking of a third person. Her brother sends to her a company of madmen, who leap and howl and hover around her in mournful wise; a pitiful sight, calculated to unseat the reason; a kind of foretaste of hell. She says nothing, looking upon them; her heart is dead, her eyes fixed:

'*Cariola.* What think you of, madam?
Duchess. Of nothing:
When I muse thus, I sleep.
C. Like a madman, with your eyes open?
D. Dost thou think we shall know one another
In th' other world?
C. Yes, out of question.
D. O, that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here. I'll tell thee a miracle;
I am not mad yet. . . .
The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar.'[2] . . .

In this state, the limbs, like those of a condemned, still quiver, but the sensibility is worn out; the miserable body only stirs mechanically; it has suffered too much. At last the gravedigger comes with executioners, a coffin, and they sing before her a funeral dirge:

'*Duchess.* Farewell, Cariola . . .
I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.—Now, what you please:
What death?
Bosola. Strangling; here are your executioners.
D. I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' th' lungs
Would do as much as they do. . . . My body
Bestow upon my women, will you? . . .
Go, tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet.'[3]

After the mistress the maid; the latter cries and struggles:

[1] *Duchess of Malfi.* iv. 1. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 2. [3] *Ibid.*

'*Cariola.* I will not die; I must not; I am contracted
To a young gentleman.
1*st Executioner.* Here's your wedding-ring.
C. If you kill me now,
I am damn'd. I have not been at confession
This two years.
B. When?[1]
C. I am quick with child.'[2]

They strangle her also, and the two children of the duchess. Antonio is assassinated; the cardinal and his mistress, the duke and his confidant, are poisoned or butchered; and the solemn words of the dying, in the midst of this butchery, utter, as from funereal trumpets, a general curse upon existence:

'We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves,
That, ruin'd, yield no echo. Fare you well. . . .
O, this gloomy world!
In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!'[3]. . .

'In all our quest of greatness,
Like wanton boys, whose pastime is their care,
We follow after bubbles blown in the air.
Pleasure of life, what is't? only the good hours
Of an ague; merely a preparative to rest,
To endure vexation. . . .
Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,
Like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust.'[4]

You will find nothing sadder or greater from the *Edda* to Lord Byron.

We can well imagine what powerful characters are necessary to sustain these terrible dramas. All these personages are ready for extreme acts; their resolves break forth like blows of a sword; we follow, meet at every change of scene their glowing eyes, wan lips, the starting of their muscles, the tension of their whole frame. The unrestraint of their wills contracts their violent hands, and their accumulated passion breaks out in thunder, which tears and ravages all around them, and in their own hearts. We know them, the heroes of this tragic population, Iago, Richard III., Lady Macbeth, Othello, Coriolanus, Hotspur, full of genius, courage, desire, generally enraged and criminal, always self-driven to the tomb. There are as many around Shakspeare as in his own works. Let me exhibit one more, again in the same man, Webster. No one, except Shakspeare, has seen further forward into the depths of diabolical and unchained nature. The 'White Devil' is the name which he gives to his heroine. His Vittoria Corombona receives as her lover the Duke of Brachiano, and at the first interview dreams of the issue:

[1] 'When,' an exclamation of impatience, equivalent to 'make haste,' very common among the old English dramatists.—TR.

[2] *Duchess of Malfi*, iv. 2. [3] *Ibid.* v. 5. [4] *Ibid.* v. 4 and 5.

'To pass away the time, I'll tell your grace
A dream I had last night.'

It is certainly well related, and still better chosen, of deep meaning and very clear import. Her brother Flaminio says, aside:

'Excellent devil! she hath taught him in a dream
To make away his duchess and her husband.'[1]

In short, her husband, Camillo, is strangled, the duchess poisoned, and Vittoria, accused of the two crimes, is brought before the tribunal. Step by step, like a soldier brought to bay with his back against a wall, she defends herself, refuting and defying advocates and judges, incapable of blenching or quailing, clear in mind, ready in word, amid insults and proofs, even menaced with death on the scaffold. The advocate begins to speak in Latin.

'*Vittoria.* Pray, my lord, let him speak his usual tongue;
I'll make no answer else.
Francisco de Medicis. Why, you understand Latin.
V. I do, sir; but amongst this auditory
Which come to hear my cause, the half or more
May be ignorant in't.'

She wants a duel, bare-breasted, in open day, and challenges the advocate:

'I am at the mark, sir: I'll give aim to you,
And tell you how near you shoot.'

She mocks his speech, insults him, with biting irony:

Surely, my lords, this lawyer here hath swallow'd
Some pothecaries' bills, or proclamations;
And now the hard and undigestible words
Come up, like stones we use give hawks for physic:
Why, this is Welsh to Latin.'

Then, to the strongest adjuration of the judges:

'To the point.
Find me guilty, sever head from body,
We'll part good friends: I scorn to hold my life
At yours, or any man's entreaty, sir. . . .
These are but feigned shadows of my evils:
Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils;
I am past such needless palsy. For your names
Of whore and murderess, they proceed from you,
As if a man should spit against the wind;
The filth returns in's face.'

Argument for argument: she has a parry for every blow: a parry and a thrust:

'But take you your course: it seems you have beggar'd me first,
And now would fain undo me. I have houses,
Jewels, and a poor remnant of crusadoes:
Would those would make you charitable!'

[1] *Vittoria Corombona*, i. 2.

Then, in a harsher voice:

'In faith, my lord, you might go pistol flies;
The sport would be more noble.'

They condemn her to be shut up in a house of convertites:

'*V.* A house of convertites! What's that?
Monticelso. A house of penitent whores.
V. Do the noblemen in Rome
Erect it for their wives, that I am sent
To lodge there?'

The sarcasm comes home like a sword-thrust; then another behind it; then cries and curses. She will not bend, she will not weep. She goes off erect, bitter and more haughty than ever:

'I will not weep;
No, I do scorn to call up one poor tear
To fawn on your injustice: bear me hence
Unto this house of —. what's your mitigating title?
Mont. Of convertites.
V. It shall not be a house of convertites;
My mind shall make it honester to me
Than the Pope's palace, and more peaceable
Than thy soul, though thou art a cardinal.'[1]

Against her furious lover, who accuses her of unfaithfulness, she is as strong as against her judges; she copes with him, casts in his teeth the death of his duchess, forces him to beg pardon, to marry her; she will play the comedy to the end, at the pistol's mouth, with the shamelessness and courage of a courtesan and an empress;[2] snared at last, she will be just as brave and more insulting at the dagger's point:

'Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great ambassadors;
I'll meet thy weapon half way. . . . 'Twas a manly blow;
The next thou giv'st, murder some sucking infant;
And then thou wilt be famous.'[3]

When a woman unsexes herself, her actions transcend man's, and there is nothing which she will not suffer or dare.

VII.

Opposed to this band of tragic figures, with their contorted features, brazen fronts, combative attitudes, is a troop of sweet and timid figures, tender before everything, the most graceful and loveworthy, whom it has been given to man to depict. In Shakspeare you will meet them in Miranda, Juliet, Desdemona, Virginia, Ophelia, Cordelia, Imogen;

[1] *Vittoria Corombona*, iii. 2.
[2] Compare Mme. Marneffe in Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*.
[3] *Vittoria Corombona*, v. last scene.

but they abound also in the others; and it is a characteristic of the race to have furnished them, as it is of the drama to have represented them. By a singular coincidence, the women are more of women, the men more of men, here than elsewhere. The two natures go each to its extreme: in the one to boldness, the spirit of enterprise and resistance, the warlike, imperious, and unpolished character; in the other to sweetness, devotion, patience, inextinguishable affection,[1]—a thing unknown in distant lands, and in France especially: a woman here gives herself without drawing back, and places her glory and duty in obedience, forgiveness, adoration, wishing and pretending only to be melted and absorbed daily deeper and deeper in him whom she has freely and for ever chosen.[2] It is this, an old German instinct, which these great painters of instinct diffuse here, one and all: Penthea, Dorothea, in Ford and Greene; Isabella and the Duchess of Malfi, in Webster; Bianca, Ordella, Arethusa, Juliana, Euphrasia, Amoret, and others, in Beaumont and Fletcher: there are a score of them who, under the severest tests and the strongest temptations, display this admirable power of self-abandonment and devotion.[3] The soul, in this race, is at once primitive and serious. Women keep their candour longer than elsewhere. They lose respect less quickly; weigh worth and characters less suddenly. they are less apt to think evil, and to take the measure of their husbands. To this day, a great lady, accustomed to company, can blush in the presence of an unknown man, and feel troubled like a little girl: the blue eyes are dropt, and a child-like shame flies to her rosy cheeks English women have not the smartness, the boldness of ideas, the assurance of bearing, the precocity, which with the French make of a young girl, in six months, a woman of intrigue and the queen of a drawing room.[4] A narrowed life and obedience are more easy to them. More pliant and more sedentary, they are at the same time more concentrated and introspective, more disposed to follow the noble dream called duty, which is hardly generated in mankind but by silence of the senses. They are not tempted by the voluptuous sweetness which in southern countries is breathed out in the climate, in the sky, in the general spectacle of things; which dissolves every obstacle, which makes priva-

[1] Hence the happiness and strength of the marriage tie. In France it is but an association of two comrades, tolerably alike and tolerably equal, which gives rise to endless disturbance and bickering.

[2] See the representation of this character throughout English and German literature. Stendhal, an acute observer, saturated with Italian and French morals and ideas, is astonished at this phenomenon. He understands nothing of this kind of devotion, 'this slavery which English husbands have had the wit to impose on their wives under the name of duty.' These are 'the manners of a seraglio.' See also *Corinne*, by Madame de Staël.

[3] A perfect woman already: meek and patient.—Heywood.

[4] See, by way of contrast, all Molière's women, so French; even Agnes and little Louison.

tion a snare and virtue a theory. They can rest content with dull sensations, dispense with excitement, endure weariness; and in this monotony of a regulated existence, fall back upon themselves, obey a pure idea, employ all the force of their hearts in maintaining their moral dignity. Thus supported by innocence and conscience, they introduce into love a profound and upright sentiment, abjure coquetry, vanity, and flirtations: they do not lie, they are not affected. When they love, they are not tasting a forbidden fruit, but are binding themselves for their whole life. Thus understood, love becomes almost a holy thing; the spectator no longer wishes to be malicious or to jest; women do not think of their own happiness, but of that of the loved ones; they aim not at pleasure, but at devotion. Euphrasia, relating her history to Philaster, says:

'My father oft would speak
Your worth and virtue; and, as I did grow
More and more apprehensive, I did thirst
To see the man so prais'd; but yet all this
Was but a maiden longing, to be lost
As soon as found; till sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
I thought (but it was you), enter our gates.
My blood flew out, and back again as fast,
As I had puff'd it forth, and suck'd it in
Like breath: Then was I call'd away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man,
Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, raised
So high in thoughts as I: You left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you for ever. I did hear you talk,
Far above singing! After you were gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd
What stirr'd it so: Alas! I found it love;
Yet far from lust; for could I but have liv'd
In presence of you, I had had my end.' [1]

She had disguised herself as a page,[2] followed him, was his servant, and what greater happiness for a woman than to serve on her knees the man she loves? She let him scold her, threaten her with death, wound her.

'Blest be that hand!
It meant me well. Again, for pity's sake!' [3]

Do what he will, nothing but words of tenderness and adoration can leave this heart, these wan lips. More, she takes upon herself a crime of which he is accused, contradicts his assertions, is ready to die in his place. Still more, she is of use to him with the Princess Arethusa,

[1] Beaumont and Fletcher, Works, ed. G. Colman, 3 vols. 1811, *Philaster*, v. 5
[2] Like Kaled in Byron's *Lara*. [3] *Philaster*, iv. 4.

whom he loves; she justifies her rival, brings about their marriage, and asks no other thanks but that she may serve them both. And strange to say, the princess is not jealous.

'*Euphrasia.* Never, Sir, will I
Marry; it is a thing within my vow:
But if I may have leave to serve the princess,
To see the virtues of her lord and her,
I shall have hope to live.
Arethusa. . . . Come, live with me;
Live free as I do. She that loves my lord,
Curst be the wife that hates her!'[1]

What notion of love have they in this country? Whence happens it that all selfishness, all vanity, all rancour, every little feeling, either personal or base, flees at its approach? How comes it that the soul is given up wholly, without hesitation, without reserve, and only dreams thenceforth of prostrating and annihilating itself, as in the presence of a God? Biancha, thinking Cesario ruined, offers herself to him as his wife; and learning that he is not so, gives him up straightway, without a murmur:

'*Biancha.* So dearly I respected both your fame
And quality, that I would first have perish'd
In my sick thoughts, than e'er have given consent
To have undone your fortunes, by inviting
A marriage with so mean a one as I am:
I should have died sure, and no creature known
The sickness that had kill'd me. . . . Now since I know
There is no difference 'twixt your birth and mine,
Not much 'twixt our estates (if any be
The advantage is on my side), I come willingly
To tender you the first-fruits of my heart,
And am content t'accept you for my husband,
Now when you are at lowest . . .
Cesario. Why, Biancha,
Report has cozen'd thee; I am not fallen
From my expected honours or possessions,
Tho' from the hope of birth-right.
B. Are you not?
Then I am lost again! I have a suit too;
You'll grant it, if you be a good man. . . .
Pray do not talk of aught what I have said t'ye. .
. . . Pity me;
But never love me more. . . . I'll pray for you,
That you may have a virtuous wife, a fair one;
And when I'm dead . . . *C.* Fy, fy! *B.* Think on me sometimes
With mercy for this trespass! *C.* Let us kiss
At parting, as at coming. *B.* This I have

[1] *Philaster*, v. 5.

As a free dower to a virgin's grave,
All goodness dwell with you!'[1]

The Duchess of Brachiano is betrayed, insulted by her faithless husband; to shield him from the vengeance of her family, she takes upon herself the blame of the rupture, purposely plays the shrew, and leaving him at peace with his courtesan, dies embracing his picture. Arethusa allows herself to be wounded by Philaster, stays the people who would hold back the murderer's arm, declares that he has done nothing, that it is not he, prays for him, loves him in spite of all, even to the end, as though all his acts were sacred, as if he had power of life and death over her. Ordella devotes herself, that the king, her husband may have children;[2] she offers herself for a sacrifice, simply, without grand words, with her whole heart:

'*Ordella.* Let it be what it may then, what it dare.
I have a mind will hazard it.
Thierry. But hark you;
What may that woman merit, makes this blessing?
O. Only her duty, sir. *T.* 'Tis terrible!
O. 'Tis so much the more noble.
T. 'Tis full of fearful shadows! *O.* So is sleep, sir,
Or anything that's merely ours, and mortal;
We were begotten gods else: but those fears,
Feeling but once the fires of nobler thoughts,
Fly, like the shapes of the clouds we form, to nothing.
T. Suppose it death! *O.* I do. *T.* And endless parting
With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,
With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay reason,
For in the silent grave, no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel, nothing's heard,
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust and an endless darkness: and dare you, woman,
Desire this place? *O.* 'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest:
Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,
And kings from height of all their painted glories
Fall, like spent exhalations, to this centre. . . .
T. Then you can suffer? *O.* As willingly as say it.
T. Martell, a wonder!
Here's a woman that dares die.—Yet tell me,
Are you a wife? *O.* I am, sir. *T.* And have children?—
She sighs and weeps! *O.* Oh, none, sir. *T.* Dare you venture,
For a poor barren praise you ne'er shall hear,
To part with these sweet hopes? *O.* With all but Heaven.'[3]

Is not this grand? Can you understand how one human being can

[1] Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, iv.
[2] Beaumont and Fletcher, *Thierry and Theodoret*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Philaster*. See also the part of Lucina in *Valentinian*.
[3] *Thierry and Theodoret*, iv. 1.

thus be separated from herself, forget and lose herself in another? They do so lose themselves, as in an abyss. When they love in vain and without hope, neither reason nor life resist; they languish, grow mad, die like Ophelia. Aspasia, forlorn,

> 'Walks discontented, with her watry eyes
> Bent on the earth. The unfrequented woods
> Are her delight; and when she sees a bank
> Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell
> Her servants what a pretty place it were
> To bury lovers in; and make her maids
> Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.
> She carries with her an infectious grief
> That strikes all her beholders; she will sing
> The mournful'st things that ever ear hath heard,
> And sigh and sing again; and when the rest
> Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,
> Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room
> With laughter, she will with so sad a look
> Bring forth a story of the silent death
> Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief
> Will put in such a phrase, that, ere she end,
> She'll send them weeping one by one away.'[1]

Like a spectre about a tomb, she wanders for ever about the remains of her slain lover, languishes, grows pale, swoons, ends by causing herself to be killed. Sadder still are those who, from duty or submission, allow themselves to be led to other nuptials. They are not resigned, do not recover, like Pauline in *Polyeucte*. They are shattered. Penthea, in the *Broken Heart*, is as upright, but not so strong, as Pauline; she is the English wife, not the Roman, stoical and calm.[2] She despairs, sweetly, silently, and pines to death. In her innermost heart she holds herself married to him to whom she has pledged her soul: it is the marriage of the heart which in her eyes is alone genuine; the other is only disguised adultery. In marrying Bassanes she has sinned against Orgilus; moral infidelity is worse than legal infidelity, and thenceforth she is fallen in her own eyes. She says to her brother:

[1] Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, i. 1.

[2] Pauline says, in Corneille's *Polyeucte* (iii. 2):

> 'Avant qu'abandonner mon âme à mes douleurs,
> Il me faut essayer la force de mes pleurs;
> En qualité de femme ou de fille, j'espère
> Qu'ils vaincront un époux, ou fléchiront un père.
> Que si sur l'un et l'autre ils manquent de pouvoir,
> Je ne prendrai conseil que de mon désespoir.
> Apprends-moi cependant ce qu'ils ont fait au temple.'

We could not find a more reasonable and reasoning woman. So with Eliante, Henriette, in Molière.

'Play, kill me. . . .
Kill, me, pray; nay, will you?
Ithocles. How does thy lord esteem thee? *P.* Such an one
As only you have made me; a faith-breaker,
A spotted whore; forgive me, I am one—
In act, not in desires, the gods must witness. . . .
For she that's wife to Orgilus, and lives
In known adultery with Bassanes,
Is, at the best, a whore. Wilt kill me now? . . .
The handmaid to the wages
Of country toil, drinks the untroubled streams
With leaping kids, and with the bleating lambs,
And so allays her thirst secure; whilst I
Quench my hot sighs with fleetings of my tears.' [1]

With tragic greatness, from the height of her incurable grief, she throws her gaze on life:

'My glass of life, sweet princess, hath few minutes
Remaining to run down; the sands are spent
For by an inward messenger I feel
The summons of departure short and certain. . . . Glories
Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams,
And shadows soon decaying; on the stage
Of my mortality, my youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length
By varied pleasures, sweeten'd in the mixture,
But tragical in issue. . . . That remedy
Must be a winding-sheet, a fold of lead,
And some untrod-on corner in the earth.' [2]

There is no revolt, no bitterness; she affectionately assists her brother who has caused her unhappiness; she tries to enable him to win the woman he loves; feminine kindness and sweetness overflow in her in the depths of her despair. Love here is not despotic, passionate, as in southern climes. It is only deep and sad; the source of life is dried up, that is all; she lives no longer, because she cannot; all goes by degrees—health, reason, soul; in the end she becomes mad, and behold her dishevelled, with wide staring eyes, with broken words. For ten days she has not slept, and will not eat again; and the same fatal thought continually afflicts her heart, amidst vague dreams of maternal tenderness and happiness brought to nought, which come and go in her mind like phantoms:

'Sure, if we were all sirens, we should sing pitifully,
And 'twere a comely music, when in parts
One sung another's knell; the turtle sighs
When he hath lost his mate; and yet some say
He must be dead first: 'tis a fine deceit
To pass away in a dream! indeed, I've slept

[1] Ford's *Broken Heart*, iii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 5.

With mine eyes open, a great while. No falsehood
Equals a broken faith; there's not a hair
Sticks on my head, but, like a leaden plummet,
It sinks me to the grave: I must creep thither;
The journey is not long. . . .
Since I was first a wife, I might have been
Mother to many pretty prattling babes;
They would have smiled when I smiled; and, for certain
I should have cried when they cried;—truly, brother,
My father would have picked me out a husband,
And then my little ones had been no bastards;
But 'tis too late for me to marry now,
I am past child-bearing; 'tis not my fault. . . .
Spare your hand;
Believe me, I'll not hurt it. . . .
Complain not though I wring it hard: I'll kiss it;
Oh, 'tis a fine, soft palm!—hark, in thine ear;
Like whom do I look, prithee?—nay, no whispering.
Goodness! we had been happy; too much happiness
Will make folk proud, they say. . .
There is no peace left for a ravish'd wife,
Widow'd by lawless marriage; to all memory
Penthea's, poor Penthea's name is strumpeted. . . ,
Forgive me; Oh! I faint.' [1]

She dies, imploring that some gentle voice may sing her a plaintive air, a farewell ditty, a sweet funeral song. I know nothing in the drama more pure and touching.

When we find a constitution of soul so new, and capable of such great effects, it behoves us to look at the bodies. Man's extreme actions come not from his will, but his nature.[2] In order to understand the great tensions of the whole machine, we must look upon the whole machine,—I mean man's temperament, the manner in which his blood flows, his nerves quiver, his muscles are interwoven: the moral interprets the physical, and human qualities have their root in the animal species. Consider then the species in this case—the race, that is; for the sisters of Shakspeare's Ophelia and Virginia, Goethe's Clara and Margaret, Otway's Belvidera, Richardson's Pamela, constitute a race by themselves, soft and fair, with blue eyes, lily whiteness, blushing, of timid delicacy, serious sweetness, framed to yield, bend, cling. Their poets feel it clearly when they bring them on the stage; they surround them with the poetry which becomes them, the murmur of streams, the pendent willow-tresses, the frail and humid flowers of the country, so like themselves:

[1] Ford's *Broken Heart*, iv. 2.

[2] Schopenhauer, *Metaphysics of Love and Death* Swift also said that death and love are the two things in which man is fundamentally irrational. In fact, it is the species and the instinct which are displayed in them, not the will and the individual.

'The flower, that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azure harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath.'[1]

They make them sweet, like the south wind, which with its gentle breath causes the violets to bend their heads, abashed at the slightest reproach, already half bowed down by a tender and dreamy melancholy.[2] Philaster, speaking of Euphrasia, whom he takes for a page, and who has disguised herself in order to be near him, says:

'Hunting the buck,
I found him sitting, by a fountain-side,
Of which he borrow'd some to quench his thirst,
And paid the nymph again as much in tears.
A garland lay him by, made by himself,
Of many several flowers, bred in the bay,
Stuck in that mystic order, that the rareness
Delighted me: But ever when he turn'd
His tender eyes upon 'em, he would weep,
As if he meant to make 'em grow again.
Seeing such pretty helpless innocence
Dwell in his face, I ask'd him all his story
He told me, that his parents gentle dy'd,
Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,
Which gave him roots; and of the crystal springs,
Which did not stop their courses; and the sun
Which still, he thank'd him, yielded him his light.
Then he took up his garland, and did shew
What every flower, as country people hold,
Did signify; and how all, order'd thus,
Express'd his grief; And, to my thoughts, did read
The prettiest lecture of his country art
That could be wish'd. . . . I gladly entertained him,
Who was as glad to follow; and have got
The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy
That ever master kept.'[3]

The idyl is self-produced among these human flowers; the drama delays before the angelic sweetness of their tenderness and modesty. Sometimes even the idyl is born complete and pure, and the whole theatre is occupied by a sentimental and poetical kind of opera. There are two or three such in Shakspeare; in rude Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd;* in Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess.* Ridiculous titles nowadays, for they remind us of the interminable platitudes of d'Urfé, or the affected conceits of Florian; charming titles, if we note the sincere and overflowing poetry which they contain. Amoret, the faithful shepherdess, lives in an imaginary country, full of old gods,

[1] *Cymbeline*, iv. 2.

[2] The death of Ophelia, the obsequies of Imogen.

[3] *Philaster*, i. 1.

yet English, like the dewy verdant landscapes in which Rubens sets his nymphs dancing:

'Thro' yon same bending plain
That flings his arms down to the main,
And thro' these thick woods have I run,
Whose bottom never kiss'd the sun
Since the lusty spring began.' . . .

'For to that holy wood is consecrate
A virtuous well, about whose flow'ry banks
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds,
By the pale moon-shine, dipping oftentimes
Their stolen children, so to make them free
From dying flesh and dull mortality.' . . .[1]

'See the dew-drops, how they kiss
Ev'ry little flower that is;
Hanging on their velvet heads,
Like a rope of christal beads.
See the heavy clouds low falling,
And bright Hesperus down calling
The dead Night from underground.'[2]

These are the plants and the aspects of the ever fresh English country, now enveloped in a pale diaphanous mist, now glistening under the absorbing sun, teeming with plants so full of sap, so delicate, that in the midst of their most brilliant splendour and their most luxuriant life, we feel that to-morrow will wither them. There, on a summer-night, the young men and girls, after their custom,[3] go to gather flowers and plight their troth. Amoret and Perigot are together; Amoret,

'Fairer far
Than the chaste blushing morn, or that fair star
That guides the wand'ring seaman thro' the deep,'

modest like a virgin, and tender as a wife, says to Perigot:

'I do believe thee: 'Tis as hard for me
To think thee false, and harder, than for thee
To hold me foul.'[4]

Strongly as she is tried, her heart, once given, never draws back Perigot, deceived, driven to despair, persuaded that she is unchaste, strikes her with his sword, and casts her bleeding to the ground. The sullen Shepherd throws her into a well; but the god lets fall 'a drop from his watery locks' into the wound: the chaste flesh closes at the touch of the divine water, and the maiden, recovering, goes once more in search of him she loves:

'Speak if thou be here,
My Perigot! Thy Amoret, thy dear,

[1] Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 1.

[3] See the description in Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times.*

[4] Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1.

Calls on thy loved name. . . . 'Tis thy friend,
Thy Amoret; come hither to give end
To these consumings. Look up, gentle boy;
I have forgot those pains and dear annoy
I suffer'd for thy sake, and am content
To be thy love again. Why hast thou rent
Those curled locks, where I have often hung
Ribbons, and damask roses, and have flung
Waters distill'd to make thee fresh and gay,
Sweeter than nosegays on a bridal day?
Why dost thou cross thine arms, and hang thy face
Down to thy bosom, letting fall apace,
From those two little Heav'ns, upon the ground,
Show'rs of more price, more orient, and more round,
Than those that hang upon the moon's pale brow?
Cease these complainings, shepherd! I am now
The same I ever was, as kind and free,
And can forgive before you ask of me:
Indeed, I can and will.'[1]

Who could resist her sweet and sad smile? Still deceived, Perigot wounds her again; she falls, but without anger.

'So this work hath end!
Farewell, and live! be constant to thy friend
That loves thee next.'[2]

A nymph cures her, and at last Perigot, disabused, comes and throws himself on his knees before her. She stretches out her arms; in spite of all that he had done, she was not changed:

'I am thy love!
Thy Amoret, for evermore thy love!
Strike once more on my naked breast, I'll prove
As constant still. Oh, cou'dst thou love me yet,
How soon could I my former griefs forget!'[3]

Such are the touching and poetical figures which these poets introduce in their dramas, or in connection with their dramas, amidst murders, assassinations, the clash of swords, the howl of slaughter, in contrast with the furious men who adore or woo them, like them carried to excess, transported by their tenderness as the others by their violence: it is the complete exposition, the perfect opposition of the feminine instinct led to self-abandoning recklessness, and the masculine harshness led to murderous rage. Thus built up and thus provided, the drama of the age was enabled to exhibit the inner depths of man, and to set in motion the most powerful human emotions; to bring upon the stage Hamlet and Lear, Ophelia and Cordelia, the death of Desdemona and the butcheries of Macbeth.

[1] *The Faithful Shepherdess*, iv. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* v. Compare, as an illustration of the contrast of races, the Italian pastorals, Tasso's *Aminta*, Guarini's *Il Pastor fido*, etc.

CHAPTER III.

Ben Jonson.

I. The masters of the school, in the school and in their age—Jonson—His mood—Character—Education—First efforts—Struggles—Poverty—Sickness—Death.

II. His learning—Classical tastes—Didactic characters—Good management of his plots—Freedom and precision of his style—Vigour of his will and passion.

III. His dramas—*Catiline* and *Sejanus*—How he was able to depict the personages and the passions of the Roman decadence.

IV. His comedies—His reformation and theory of the theatre—His satirical comedies—*Volpone*—Why these comedies are serious and warlike—How they depict the passions of the Renaissance—His farces—*The Silent Woman*—Why these comedies are energetic and rude—How they conform with the tastes of the Renaissance.

V. Limits of his talent—Wherein he remains beneath Molière—Want of higher philosophy and comic gaiety—His imagination and fancy—*The Staple of News* and *Cynthia's Revels*—How he treats the comedy of society, and lyrical comedy—His smaller poems—His masques—Theatrical and picturesque manners of the court—*The Sad Shepherd*—How Jonson remains a poet to his death.

VI. General idea of Shakspeare—The fundamental idea in Shakspeare—Conditions of human reason—Shakspeare's master faculty—Conditions of exact representation.

I.

WHEN a new civilisation brings a new art to light, there are about a dozen men of talent who express the general idea, surrounding one or two men of genius who express it thoroughly. Guilhem de Castro, Pérès de Montalvan, Tirso de Molina, Ruiz de Alarcon, Augustin Moreto, surrounding Calderon and Lope de Vega; Crayer, Van Oost, Romboust, Van Thulden, Van Dyk, Honthorst, surrounding Rubens; Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, Webster, Beaumont, Fletcher, surrounding Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. The first constitute the chorus, the others are the leaders. They sing the same piece together, and at times the chorus is equal to the solo; but only at times. Thus, in the dramas which I have just referred to, the poet occasionally reaches the summit of his art, hits upon a complete character, a burst of sublime passion; then he falls back, gropes amid qualified successes, rough sketches, feeble imitations, and at last takes refuge in the tricks of his

trade It is not in him, but in great men like Ben Jonson and Shakspeare, that we must look for the attainment of his idea and the fulness of his art. 'Numerous were the wit-combats,' says Fuller, 'betwixt him (Shakspeare) and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakspeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.'[1] Such was Jonson physically and morally, and his portraits do but confirm this just and lively sketch: a vigorous, heavy, and uncouth person; a wide and long face, early marred by scurvy, a square jaw, enormous cheeks; his animal organs as much developed as those of his intellect: the sour aspect of a man in a passion or on the verge of a passion; to which add the body of an athlete, about forty years of age, 'mountain belly, ungracious gait.' Such was the outside, and the inside is like it. He was a genuine Englishman, big and coarsely framed, energetic, combative, proud, often morose, and prone to strange splenetic imaginations. He related to Drummond that for a whole night he imagined 'that he saw the Carthaginians and the Romans fighting on his great toe.'[2] Not that he is melancholic by nature; on the contrary, he loves to escape from himself by a wide and blustering licence of merriment, by copious and varied converse, assisted by good Canary wine, with which he drenches himself, and which ends by becoming a necessity to him. These great phlegmatic butchers' frames require a generous liquor to give them a tone, and to supply the place of the sun which they lack. Expansive moreover, hospitable, even prodigal, with a frank imprudent heartiness,[3] making him forget himself wholly before Drummond, his Scotch host, a vigorous and malicious pedant, who has marred his ideas and vilified his character. What we know of his life is in harmony with his person: he suffered much, fought much, dared much. He was studying at Cambridge, when his father-in-law, a bricklayer, recalled him, and set him to the trowel. He ran away, enlisted as a volunteer into the army of the Low Countries, killed and despoiled a man in single combat, 'in the view of both armies.' You see he was a man of bodily action, and that he exercised his limbs in early life.[4] On his return to England, at the age of nineteen, he went on the stage for his livelihood, and occupied himself also in touching up dramas. Having been provoked, he fought, was seriously wounded, but killed his adversary; after that, he was cast into prison, and found

[1] Fuller's *Worthies*, ed. Nuttall, 1840, 3 vols., iii. 284.

[2] There is a similar hallucination to be met with in the life of Lord Castlereagh, who afterwards cut his throat.

[3] His character lies between those of Fielding and Samuel Johnson.

[4] At the age of forty-four he went to Scotland on foot.

himself 'nigh the gallows.' A Catholic priest visited and converted him; quitting his prison penniless, at twenty years of age, he married. At last, two years later, he produced his first play. Children came, he must earn them bread; and he was not of the stuff to follow the beaten track to the end, being persuaded that a fine philosophy ought to be introduced into comedy, a special nobleness and dignity,—that it was necessary to follow the example of the ancients, to imitate their severity and their accuracy, to be above the theatrical racket and the rude improbabilities in which the common herd delighted. He openly proclaimed his intention in his prefaces, roundly railed at his rivals, proudly set forth on the stage[1] his doctrines, his morality, his character. He thus made bitter enemies, who defamed him outrageously and before their audiences, whom he exasperated by the violence of his satires, and against whom he struggled without intermission to the end. More, he constituted himself a judge of the public corruption, rudely attacked the reigning vices, 'fearing no strumpets drugs, nor ruffians stab.'[2] He treated his hearers like schoolboys, and spoke to them always like a censor and a master. If necessary, he ventured further. His companions, Marston and Chapman, had been put in prison for an irreverent phrase in one of their pieces; and the report spreading that their noses and ears were to be slit, Jonson, who had taken part in the piece, voluntarily made himself a prisoner, and obtained their pardon. On his return, amid the feasting and rejoicing, his mother showed him a violent poison which she intended to put into his drink, to save him from the sentence; and 'to show that she was not a coward,' adds Jonson, 'she had resolved to drink first.' We see that in the matter of vigorous actions he found examples in his own family. Toward the end of his life, money failed him; he was liberal, improvident; his pockets always had holes in them, as his hand was always open; though he had written a vast quantity, he was obliged to write still in order to live. Paralysis came on, his scurvy was aggravated, dropsy attacked him. He could not leave his room, nor walk without assistance. His last plays did not succeed. In the epilogue to the *New Inn* he says:

> 'If you expect more than you had to-night,
> The maker is sick and sad. . . .
> All that his faint and falt'ring tongue doth crave,
> Is, that you not impute it to his brain,
> That's yet unhurt, altho' set round with pain,
> It cannot long hold out.'

His enemies brutally insulted him:

> 'Thy Pegasus . . .
> He had bequeathed his belly unto thee,
> To hold that little learning which is fled
> Into thy guts from out thy emptye head.'

[1] Parts of *Crites and Asper*

[2] *Every Man out of his Humour.*

Inigo Jones, his colleague, deprived him of the patronage of the court. He was obliged to beg a supply of money from the Lord Treasurer, then from the Earl of Newcastle:

> 'Disease, the enemy, and his engineers,
> Want, with the rest of his concealed compeers,
> Have cast a trench about me, now five years. . . .
> The muse not peeps out, one of hundred days;
> But lies blocked up and straitened, narrowed in,
> Fixed to the bed and boards, unlike to win
> Health, or scarce breath, as she had never been.'[1]

His wife and children were dead; he lived alone, forsaken, served by an old woman. Thus almost always, sadly and miserably is dragged out and ends the last act of the human comedy. After so many years, after so many sustained efforts, amid so much glory and genius, we find a poor shattered body, drivelling and suffering, between a servant and a priest.

II.

This is the life of a combatant, bravely endured, worthy of the seventeenth century by its crosses and its energy; courage and force abounded throughout. Few writers have laboured more, and more conscientiously; his knowledge was vast, and in this age of great scholars he was one of the best classics of his time, as deep as he was accurate and thorough, having studied the minutest details of ancient life. It was not enough for him to have stored himself from the best writers, to have their whole works continually in his mind, to scatter his pages, whether he would or no, with recollections of them. He dug into the orators, critics, scholiasts, grammarians, and compilers of inferior rank; he picked up stray fragments; he took characters, jokes, refinements, from Athenæus, Libanius, Philostratus. He had so well entered into and digested the Greek and Latin ideas, that they were incorporated with his own. They enter into his speech without discord; they spring forth in him as vigorous as at their first birth; he originates even when he remembers. On every subject he had this thirst for knowledge, and this gift of mastering knowledge. He knew alchemy when he wrote the *Alchemist*. He is familiar with alembics, retorts, receivers, as if he had passed his life seeking after the philosopher's stone. He explains incineration, calcination, imbibition, rectification, reverberation, as well as Agrippa and Paracelsus. If he speaks of cosmetics,[2] he brings out a shopful of them; one might make out of his plays a dictionary of the oaths and costumes of courtiers; he seems to have a specialty in all branches. A still greater proof of his force is,

[1] Ben Jonson's *Poems*, ed Bell, *An Epistle Mendicant*, to Richard, Lord Weston, Lord High Treasurer (1631), p. 244.

[2] *The Devil is an Ass.*

that his learning in nowise mars his vigour; heavy as is the mass with which he loads himself, he carries it without stooping. This wonderful compound of reading and observation suddenly begins to move, and falls like a mountain on the overwhelmed reader. We must hear Sir Epicure Mammon unfold the vision of splendours and debauchery, in which he means to plunge, when he has learned to make gold. The refined and unchecked impurities of the Roman decadence, the splendid obscenities of Heliogabalus, the gigantic fancies of luxury and lewdness, tables of gold spread with foreign dainties, draughts of dissolved pearls, nature devastated to provide a single dish, the crimes committed by sensuality, against nature, reason, and justice, the delight in defying and outraging law,—all these images pass before the eyes with the dash of a torrent and the force of a great river. Phrase on phrase, event upon event, ideas and facts crowd into the dialogue to paint a situation, to give clearness to a character, produced from this deep memory, directed by this solid logic, launched by this powerful reflection. It is a pleasure to see him advance under the weight of so many observations and recollections, loaded with technical details and learned reminiscences, without deviation or pause, a genuine literary Leviathan, like the war elephants which used to bear towers, men, weapons, machines on their backs, and ran as swiftly under the freight as a nimble steed.

In the great dash of this heavy advance, he finds a path which suits him. He has his style. Classical erudition and education made him a classic, and he writes like his Greek models and his Roman masters. The more we study the Latin races and literatures in contrast with the Teutonic, the more fully we become convinced that the proper and distinctive gift of the first is the art of development, that is, of drawing up ideas in connected rank, according to the rules of rhetoric and eloquence, by studied transitions, with regular progress, without shock or discontinuity. Jonson received from his acquaintance with the ancients the habit of decomposing ideas, unfolding them part by part in natural order, making himself understood and believed. From the first thought to the final conclusion, he conducts the reader by a continuous and uniform ascent. The track never fails with him, as with Shakspeare. He does not advance like the rest by sudden intuitions, but by consecutive deductions; we can walk with him without need of bounding, and we are continually kept upon the straight path: antithesis of words unfolds antithesis of thoughts; symmetrical phrases guide the mind through difficult ideas; they are like barriers set on either side of the road to prevent our falling in the ditch. We do not meet on our way extraordinary, sudden, brilliant images, which might dazzle or delay us; we travel on, enlightened by moderate and sustained metaphors. Jonson has all the procedures of Latin art; even, when he wishes it, especially on Latin subjects, he has the last and most erudite, the brilliant concision of Seneca and Lucan, the parallel equipoised, filed off antitheses,

the most happy and studied artifices of oratorical architecture.[1] Other poets for the most part are visionaries; Jonson is all but a logician.

Hence his talent, his successes, and his faults: if he has a better style and better plots than the others, he is not, like them, a creator of souls. He is too much of a theorist, too preoccupied by rules. His argumentative habits spoil him when he seeks to shape and motion complete, and living men. No one is capable of fashioning these unless he possesses, like Shakspeare, the imagination of a seer. The human being is so complex, that the logician who perceives his different elements in succession can hardly study them all, much less gather them all in one flash, so as to produce the dramatic response or action in which they are concentrated, and which would manifest them. To discover such actions and responses, we need a kind of inspiration and fever. Then the mind works as in a dream. The characters move within the poet, almost involuntarily: he waits for them to speak, he remains motionless, hearing their voices, withdrawn into himself, in order that he may not disturb the drama which they are about to act in his soul. That is his artifice: to let them alone. He is altogether astonished at their discourse; as he observes them, he forgets that it is he who invents them. Their mood, character, education, disposition of mind, situation, attitude, and actions, make up to him so well-connected a whole, and so readily unite into palpable and solid beings, that he dares not attribute to his reflection or reasoning a creation so vast and speedy. Beings are organised in him as in nature, that is, of themselves, and by a force which the combinations of his art could not replace.[2] Jonson has nothing wherewith to replace it but these combinations of art. He chooses a general idea — cunning, folly, severity — and makes a person out of it. This person is called Crites, Asper, Sordido, Deliro, Pecunia, Subtil, and the transparent name indicates the logical process which produced it. The poet took an abstract quality, and putting together all the acts to which it may give rise, trots it out on the stage in a man's dress. His characters, like those of la Bruyère and Theophrastus, were hammered out of solid deductions. Now it is a vice selected from the catalogue of moral philosophy, sensuality thirsting for gold: this perverse double inclination becomes a personage, Sir Epicure Mammon; before the alchemist, before the famulus, before his friend, before his mistress, in public or alone, all his words denote a greed of pleasure and of gold, and they express nothing more.[3] Now it is a piece of madness gathered from the old sophists, a babbling with horror of noise; this form of mental pathology becomes a personage, Morose; the poet has the air of a doctor who has undertaken

[1] *Sejanus, Catilina, passim.*

[2] Alfred de Musset, preface to *La Coupe et les Levres.* Plato: *Ion.*

[3] Compare Sir Epicure Mammon with Baron Hulot from Balzac's *Cousins Bette.* Balzac, who is learned like Jonson, creates real beings like Shakspeare

the task of recording exactly all the desires of speech, all the necessities of silence, and of recording nothing else. Now he picks out a laughable incident, an affectation, a species of folly, from the manners of the dandies and the courtiers; a mode of swearing, an extravagant style, a habit of gesticulating, or any other oddity contracted by vanity or fashion. The hero whom he covers with these eccentricities, is overloaded by them. He disappears beneath his enormous trappings; he drags them about with him everywhere; he cannot get rid of them for an instant We no longer see the man under the dress; he is like a mannikin, oppressed under a cloak, too heavy for him. Sometimes, doubtless, his habits of geometrical construction produce personages almost life-like. Bobadil, the grave boaster; Captain Tucca, the begging bully, inventive buffoon, ridiculous talker; Amorphus the traveller, a pedantic doctor of good manners, laden with eccentric phrases, create as much illusion as one can wish; but it is because they are flitting comicalities and low characters. It is not necessary for a poet to study such creatures; it is enough that he discovers in them three or four leading features; it is of little consequence if they always present themselves in the same light: they produce laughter, like the *Countess d'Escarbagnas* or any of the *Fâcheux* in Molière; we want nothing else of them. On the contrary, the others weary and repel us. They are stage-masks, not living figures. Moulded into a fixed expression, they persist to the end of the piece in their unvarying grimace or their eternal frown. A man is not an abstract passion. He stamps the vices and virtues which he possesses with his individual mark. These vices and virtues receive, on entering into him, a bent and form which they have not in others. No one is unmixed sensuality. Take a thousand sensualists, and you will find a thousand modes of sensuality; for there are a thousand paths, a thousand circumstances and degrees, in sensuality. To make Sir Epicure Mammon a real being, we must give him the kind of disposition, the species of education, the manner of imagination, which produce sensuality. When we wish to construct a man, we must dig down to the foundations of mankind; that is, we must define to ourselves the structure of his bodily machine, and the primitive gait of his mind. Jonson has not dug sufficiently deep, and his constructions are incomplete; he has built on the surface, and he has built but a single story. He was not acquainted with man in his fulness, and he ignored man's basis; he put on the stage and gave a representation of moral treatises, fragments of history, scraps of satire; he did not stamp new beings on the imagination of mankind.

He possesses all the other gifts, and in particular the classical; first of all, the talent for composition. For the first time we see a concocted plot, a complete intrigue, with its beginning, middle, and end; subordinate actions well arranged, well combined; an interest which grows and never flags; a leading truth which all the events combine to demonstrate; a ruling idea which all the characters combine to illustrate;

in short, an art like that which Molière and Racine were about to apply and teach. He does not, like Shakspeare, take a novel from Greene, a chronicle from Holinshed, a life from Plutarch, promiscuously, to cut them into scenes, irrespective of likelihood, indifferent as to order and unity, caring only to set up men, at times wandering into poetic reveries at need finishing up the piece abruptly with a recognition or a butchery. He governs himself and his characters; he wills and he knows all that they do, and all that he does. But beyond his habits of Latin regularity, he possesses the great faculty of his age and race,—the sentiment of nature and existence, the exact knowledge of precise detail, the power in frankly and boldly handling frank passions. This gift is not wanting in any writer of the time; they do not fear words that are true, shocking, and striking details of the bedchamber or medical study; the prudery of modern England and the refinement of monarchical France veil not the nudity of their figures, or dim the colouring of their pictures. They live freely, liberally, amidst living things; they see the ins and outs of lust, raging without shame, hypocrisy, or redeeming softness; and they exhibit it as they see it, Jonson as boldly as the rest, occasionally more boldly than the rest, strengthened as he is by the vigour and roughness of his athletic temperament, by the extraordinary exactness and abundance of his observations and his knowledge. Add yet his moral loftiness, his sourness, his powerful railing wrath exasperated and bitter against vice, his resolution strengthened by pride and by conscience:

> 'With an armed and resolved hand,
> I'll strip the ragged follies of the time
> Naked as at their birth . . . and with a whip of steel,
> Print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.
> I fear no mood stampt in a private brow,
> When I am pleas'd t' unmask a public vice.
> I fear no strumpets drugs, nor ruffians stab,
> Should I detect their hateful luxuries;'[1]

above all, a scorn of base compliance, a disdain for

> 'Those jaded wits
> That run a broken pace for common hire,'—[2]

an enthusiasm, or deep love of

> 'A happy muse,
> Born on the wings of her immortal thought,
> That kicks at earth with a disdainful heel,
> And beats at heaven gates with her bright hoofs.'[3]

Such are the energies which he brought to the drama and to comedy. they were great enough to ensure him a high position, and a position apart.

[1] *Every Man out of his Humour* Prologue [2] *Poetaster*, i. 2 [3] *Ibid.*

III.

For whatever Jonson undertakes, whatever be his faults, haughtiness, rough-handling, predilection for morality and the past, antiquarian and censorious instincts, he is never little or commonplace. It signifies nothing that in his Latinised tragedies, *Sejanus*, *Catiline*, he is fettered by the worship of the old worn models of the Roman decadence; nothing that he plays the scholar, hammers out Ciceronian harangues, hauls in choruses imitated from Seneca, holds forth in the style of Lucan and the rhetoricians of the empire: he more than once attains a genuine accent; through his pedantry, heaviness, literary adoration of the ancients, nature forces its way; he lights, at his first attempt, on the crudities, horrors, gigantic lechery, shameless depravity of imperial Rome; he takes in hand and sets in motion the lusts and ferocities, the passions of courtesans and princesses, the daring of assassins and of great men, which produced Messalina, Agrippina, Catiline, Tiberius.[1] In the Rome which he places before us we go boldly and straight to the end; justice and pity oppose no barriers. Amid victorious and slavish customs, human nature is upset; corruption and crime are held as marks of insight and energy. Observe how, in *Sejanus*, assassination is plotted and carried out with marvellous coolness. Livia discusses with Sejanus the methods of poisoning her husband, in a clear style, without circumlocution, as if the subject were how to gain a lawsuit or how to serve up a dinner. There are no equivocations, no hesitation, no remorse in the Rome of Tiberius. Glory and virtue consist in power; scruples are for common souls; the mark of a lofty heart is to desire all and to dare all. Macro says rightly:

> 'Men's fortune there is virtue; reason their will;
> Their licence, law; and their observance skill.
> Occasion is their foil; conscience, their stain;
> Profit, their lustre: and what else is vain.'[2]

Sejanus addresses Livia thus:

> 'Royal lady, . . .
> Yet, now I see your wisdom, judgment, strength,
> Quickness, and will, to apprehend the means
> To your own good and greatness, I protest
> Myself through rarified, and turn'd all flame
> In your affection.'[3]

These are the loves of the wolf and his mate; he praises her for being so ready to kill. And observe in one moment the morals of a prostitute appear behind the manners of the poisoner. Sejanus goes out, and immediately, like a courtesan, Livia turns to her physician, saying:

[1] See the second Act of *Catiline*.

[2] *The Fall of Sejanus* iii last Scene [3] *Ibid* ii.

'How do I look to-day?
Eudemus. Excellent clear, believe it. This same fucus
Was well laid on. *L.* Methinks 'tis here not white.
E. Lend me your scarlet, lady. 'Tis the sun
Hath giv'n some little taint unto the ceruse,
You should have us'd of the white oil I gave you.
Sejanus, for your love! His very name
Commandeth above Cupid or his shafts. . . .
'Tis now well, lady, you should
Use of the dentifrice I prescrib'd you too,
To clear your teeth, and the prepar'd pomatum,
To smooth the skin. A lady cannot be
Too curious of her form, that still would hold
The heart of such a person, made her captive,
As you have this: who, to endear him more
In your clear eye, hath put away his wife . . .
Fair Apicata, and made spacious room
To your new pleasures. *L.* Have we not return'd
That with our hate to Drusus, and discovery
Of all his counsels? . . .
E. When will you take some physick, lady? *L.* When
I shall, Eudemus: but let Drusus' drug
Be first prepar'd. *E.* Were Lygdus made, that's done. . . .
I'll send you a perfume, first to resolve
And procure sweat, and then prepare a bath
To cleanse and clear the cutis; against when
I'll have an excellent new fucus made
Resistive 'gainst the sun, the rain or wind,
Which you shall lay on with a breath or oil,
As you best like, and last some fourteen hours.
This change came timely, lady, for your health.'[1]

He ends by congratulating her on her approaching change of husbands: Drusus was injuring her complexion; Sejanus is far preferable; a physiological and practical conclusion. The Roman apothecary had on the same shelf his medicine-chest, his chest of cosmetics, and his chest of poisons.[2]

After this you find one after another all the scenes of Roman life unfolded, the bargain of murder, the comedy of justice, the shamelessness of flattery, the anguish and vacillation of the senate. When Sejanus wishes to buy a conscience, he questions, jokes, plays round the offer he is about to make, throws it out as if in pleasantry, so as to be able to withdraw it, if need be; then, when the intelligent look of the rascal, whom he is trafficking with, shows that he is understood:

[1] *The Fall of Sejanus*, ii.

[2] See *Catiline*, Act ii.; a fine scene, no less frank and lively, on the dissipation of the higher ranks in Rome.

'Protest not.
Thy looks are vows to me. . . .
Thou art a man, made to make consuls. Go.'[1]

Elsewhere the senator Latiaris brings to him his friend Sabinus, storms before the latter against tyranny, openly expresses a desire for liberty, provoking him to speak. Then two spies who were hid behind the door, cast themselves on Sabinus, crying, 'Treason to Cæsar!' and drag him, with his face covered, before the tribunal, thence to 'be thrown upon the Gemonies.'[2] So, when the senate is assembled, Tiberius has chosen beforehand the accusers of Silius, and their parts distributed to them. They mumble in a corner, whilst aloud is heard, in the emperor's presence:

'Cæsar,
Live long and happy, great and royal Cæsar;
The gods preserve thee and thy modesty,
Thy wisdom and thy innocence. . . . Guard
His meekness, Jove, his piety, his care,
His bounty.'[3]

Then the herald cites the accused; Varro, the consul, pronounces the indictment; Afer hurls upon them his bloodthirsty eloquence: the senators get excited; we see laid bare, as in Tacitus and Juvenal, the depths of Roman servility, hypocrisy, insensibility, the venomous craft of Tiberius. At last, after so many others, the turn of Sejanus comes. The fathers anxiously assemble in the temple of Apollo; for some days past Tiberius has seemed to be trying to contradict himself; he has removed the friend of his favourite, and next day sets his enemies in high positions. They mark the face of Sejanus, and know not what to anticipate; Sejanus is troubled, then after a moment's cringing is more arrogant than ever. The plots are confused, the rumours contradictory. Macro alone is in the confidence of Tiberius, and soldiers are seen, drawn up at the porch of the temple, ready to enter at the earliest sound. The formula of convocation is read, and the council marks the names of those who do not respond to the summons; then Regulus addresses them, and announces that Cæsar

'Propounds to this grave senate, the bestowing
Upon the man he loves, honour'd Sejanus,
The tribunitial dignity and power:
Here are his letters, signed with his signet.
What pleaseth now the Fathers to be done!'
'*Senators.* Read, read 'em, open, publicly read 'em.
Cotta. Cæsar hath honour'd his own greatness much
In thinking of this act. *Trio.* It was a thought
Happy, and worthy Cæsar. *Latiaris.* And the lord
As worthy it, on whom it is directed!

[1] *The Fall of Sejanus*, i. [2] *Ibid.* iv. [3] *Ibid* iii.

Haterius. Most worthy! *Sanquinius.* Rome did never boast the virtue
That could give envy bounds, but his: Sejanus.—
1*st Sen.* Honour'd and noble! 2*d Sen.* Good and great Sejanus!
Præcones. Silence!'[1]

Tiberius' letter is read. First, long obscure and vague phrases, mingled with indirect protests and accusations, foreboding something and revealing nothing. Suddenly comes an insinuation against Sejanus. The fathers are alarmed, but the next line reassures them. A word or two further on, the same insinuation is repeated with greater exactness. 'Some there be that would interpret this his public severity to be particular ambition; and that, under a pretext of service to us, he doth but remove his own lets: alledging the strengths he hath made to himself, by the prætorian soldiers, by his faction in court and senate, by the offices he holds himself, and confers on others, his popularity and dependents, his urging (and almost driving) us to this our unwilling retirement, and lastly, his aspiring to be our son-in-law.' The fathers rise: 'This 's strange!' Their eager eyes are fixed on the letter, on Sejanus, who perspires and grows pale; their thoughts are busy with conjectures, and the words of the letter fall one by one, amidst a sepulchral silence, caught as they fall with a devouring eagerness of attention. The senators anxiously weigh the value of these varying expressions, fearing to compromise themselves with the favourite or with the prince, all feeling that they must understand, if they value their lives.

'"Your wisdoms, Conscript Fathers, are able to examine, and censure these suggestions. But, were they left to our absolving voice, we durst pronounce them, as we think them, most malicious."
Senator. O, he has restor'd all; list.
Præco. "Yet are they offer'd to be averr'd, and on the lives of the informers."'[2]

At this word the letter becomes menacing. Those next Sejanus forsake him. 'Sit farther. . . . Let's remove!' The heavy Sanquinius leaps panting over the benches. The soldiers come in; then Macro. And now, at last, the letter orders the arrest of Sejanus.

'*Regulus.* Take him hence.
And all the gods guard Cæsar! *Trio.* Take him hence.
Haterius. Hence. *Cotta.* To the dungeon with him. *San.* He deserves it.
Sen. Crown all our doors with bays. *San.* And let an ox,
With gilded horns and garlands, straight be led
Unto the Capitol. *Hat.* And sacrific'd
To Jove, for Cæsar's safety. *Trio.* All our gods
Be present still to Cæsar! . . .
Cotta. Let all the traitor's titles be defac'd.
Trio. His images and statues be pull'd down. . . .

[1] *The Fall of Sejanus*, v. [2] *Ibid.*

Sen. Liberty! liberty! liberty! Lead on,
And praise to Macro that hath saved Rome.'[1]

It is the baying of a furious pack of hounds, let loose at last on him, under whose hand they had crouched, and who had for a long time beaten and bruised them. Jonson discovered in his own energetic soul the energy of these Roman passions; and the clearness of his mind, added to his profound knowledge, unable to construct characters, furnished him with general ideas and striking incidents, which suffice to depict manners.

IV.

Moreover, it was to this that he turned his talent Nearly all his work consists of comedies, not sentimental and fanciful as Shakspeare's, but imitative and satirical, written to represent and correct follies and vices. He introduced a new model; he had a doctrine; his masters were Terence and Plautus. He observes the unity of time and place almost exactly. He ridicules the authors who, in the same play,

'Make a child now-swaddled, to proceed
Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
Past threescore years; or, with three rusty swords,
And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars. . . .
He rather prays you will be pleas'd to see
One such to-day, as other plays should be;
Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,
Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please;
Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeard
The gentlewomen. . . .
But deeds, and language, such as men do use. . . .
You, that have so grac'd monsters, may like men.'[2]

Men, as we see them in the streets, with their whims and humours—

'When some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
In their confluxions, all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.'[3]

It is these humours which he exposes to the light, not with the artist curiosity, but with the moralist's hate:

'I will scourge those apes,
And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirrour,
As large as is the stage whereon we act;
Where they shall see the time's deformity
Anatomiz'd in every nerve, and sinew,
With constant courage and contempt of fear. . . .

[1] *The Fall of Sejanus*, v. [1] *Every Man in his Humour*, Prologue
[2] *Every Man out of his Humour*, Prologue.

My strict hand
Was made to seize on vice, and with a gripe
Squeeze out the humour of such spongy natures,
As lick up every idle vanity.'[1]

Doubtless a determination so strong and decided does violence to the dramatic spirit. Jonson's comedies are not rarely harsh; his characters are too grotesque, laboriously constructed, mere automatons; the poet thought less of making living beings than of scotching a vice; the scenes get arranged mechanically, or are confused together; we see the process, we feel the satirical intention throughout; delicate and easy-flowing imitation is absent, as well as the graceful sprightliness which abounds in Shakspeare. But if Jonson comes across harsh passions, visibly evil and vile, he will derive from his energy and wrath the talent to render them odious and visible, and will produce a *Volpone*, a sublime work, the sharpest picture of the manners of the age, in which is displayed the full brightness of the evil lusts, in which lewdness, cruelty, love of gold, shamelessness of vice, display a sinister yet splendid poetry, worthy of one of Titian's bacchanalians.[2] All this makes itself apparent in the first scene, when Volpone says:

'Good morning to the day; and next, my gold:
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint!'

This saint is his piles of gold, jewels, precious plate:

'Hail the world's soul, and mine! . . . O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
With adoration, thee, and every relick
Of sacred treasure in this blessed room!'[3]

Presently after, the dwarf, the eunuch, and the hermaphrodite of the house sing a sort of pagan and fantastic interlude; they chant in strange verses the metamorphoses of the hermaphrodite, who was first the soul of Pythagoras. We are at Venice, in the palace of the magnifico Volpone. These deformed creatures, the splendour of gold, this strange and poetical buffoonery, transport the thought immediately to the sensual city, queen of vices and of arts.

The rich Volpone lives in the antique style. Childless and without relatives, playing the invalid, he makes all his flatterers hope to be his heir, receives their gifts,

'Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again.'[4]

Glad to have their gold, but still more glad to deceive them, artistic in guile as in avarice, and just as pleased to look at a contortion of suffering as at the sparkle of a ruby.

[1] *Every Man out of his Humour*, Prologue.

[2] Compare *Volpone* with Regnard's *Légataire;* the end of the sixteenth with the beginning of the eighteenth century.

[3] *Volpone*, i. 1. [4] *Ibid.*

The advocate Voltore arrives, bearing a 'huge piece of plate.' Volpone casts himself on his bed, wraps himself in furs, heaps up his pillows, and coughs as if at the point of death:

> '*Volpone.* I thank you, signior Voltore,
> Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad. . . . Your love
> Hath taste in this, and shall not be unanswer'd . . .
> I cannot now last long. . . . I feel me going,—
> Uh, uh, uh, uh!'[1]

He closes his eyes, as though exhausted:

> 'Voltore. Am I inscrib'd his heir for certain?
> *Mosca* (*Volpone's Parasite*). Are you?
> I do beseech you, sir, you will vouchsafe
> To write me i' your family. All my hopes
> Depend upon your worship. I am lost,
> Except the rising sun do shine on me.
> *Volt.* It shall both shine and warm thee, Mosca. *M.* Sir,
> I am a man, that hath not done your love
> All the worst offices: here I wear your keys,
> See all your coffers and your caskets lockt,
> Keep the poor inventory of your jewels,
> Your plate and moneys; am your steward, sir,
> Husband your goods here. *Volt.* But am I sole heir?
> *M.* Without a partner, sir, confirm'd this morning;
> The wax is warm yet, and the ink scarce dry
> Upon the parchment. *Volt.* Happy, happy, me!
> By what good chance, sweet Mosca? *M.* Your desert, sir;
> I know no second cause.'[2]

And he details the abundance of the wealth in which Voltore is about to swim, the gold which is to pour upon him, the opulence which is to flow in his house as a river:

> 'When will you have your inventory brought, sir?
> Or see a copy of the will?'

The imagination is fed with precise words, sensible details Thus, one after another, the would-be heirs come like beasts of prey. The second is an old miser, Corbaccio, deaf, worn out, almost dying, who nevertheless hopes to survive Volpone. To make more sure of it, he would fain have Mosca give his master a narcotic He has it about him, this excellent opiate; he has had it prepared under his own eyes, he suggests it. His joy on finding Volpone more ill than himself is bitterly humorous:

> 'C. How does your patron? . . . *M.* His mouth
> Is ever gaping, and his eyelids hang.
> *C.* Good.
> *M.* A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,
> And makes the colour of his flesh like lead.

[1] *Volpone*, i. 3. [2] *Ibid.*

C. 'Tis good.
M. His pulse beats slow, and dull. *C.* Good symptoms still.
M. And from his brain. *C.* I conceive you, good.
M. Flows a cold sweat, with a continual rheum,
Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.
C. Is't possible? Yet I am better, ha!
How does he, with the swimming of his head?
M. O, sir, 'tis past the scotomy; he now
Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:
You hardly can perceive him, that he breathes.
C. Excellent, excellent, sure I shall outlast him:
This makes me young again, a score of years.'[1]

If you would be his heir, says Mosca, the moment is favourable; but you must not let yourself be forestalled. Voltore has been here, and presented him with this piece of plate:

'*C.* See, Mosca, look,
Here, I have brought a bag of bright cecchines,
Will quite weigh down his plate. . . .
M. Now, would I counsel you, make home with speed,
There, frame a will; whereto you shall inscribe
My master your sole heir. . . . *C.* This plot
Did I think on before. . . .
M. And you so certain to survive him. *C.* I.
M. Being so lusty a man. *C.* 'Tis true.'[2]

And the old man hobbles away, not hearing the insults and ridicule thrown at him, he is so deaf.

When he is gone the merchant Corvino arrives, bringing an orient pearl and a superb diamond:

'*Corvino.* Am I his heir?
Mosca. Sir, I am sworn, I may not shew the will
Till he be dead: but here has been Corbaccio,
Here has been Voltore, here were others too,
I cannot number 'em, they were so many.
All gaping here for legacies; but I,
Taking the vantage of his naming you,
Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino, took
Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I ask'd him,
Whom he would have his heir? Corvino Who
Should be executor? Corvino. And,
To any question he was silent to,
I still interpreted the nods, he made
(Through weakness) for consent: and sent home th' others,
Nothing bequeath'd them, but to cry and curse.
Cor. O my dear Mosca! . . . Has he children? *M.* Bastards,
Some dozen, or more, that he begot on beggars,
Gypsies and Jews, and black-moors, when he was drunk. . . .

[1] *Volpone*, i. 4. [2] *Ibid.*

Speak out:

You may be louder yet. . . .
Faith, I could stifle him rarely with a pillow,
As well as any woman that should keep him.
C. Do as you will, but I'll begone.'[1]

Corvino presently departs; for the passions of the time have all the beauty of frankness. And Volpone, casting aside his sick man's garb cries:

'My divine Mosca!
Thou hast to-day out-gone thyself. . . . Prepare
Me musick, dances, banquets, all delights;
The Turk is not more sensual in his pleasures,
Than will Volpone.'[2]

On this invitation, Mosca draws a most voluptuous portrait of Corvino's wife, Celia. Smitten with a sudden desire, Volpone dresses himself as a mountebank, and goes singing under her windows with all the sprightliness of a quack; for he is naturally a comedian, like a true Italian, of the same family as Scaramouch, as good an actor in the public square as in his house. Having once seen Celia, he resolves to obtain her at any price:

'Mosca, take my keys,
Gold, plate, and jewels, all's at thy devotion;
Employ them how thou wilt; nay, coin me too:
So thou, in this, but crown my longings, Mosca.'[3]

Mosca tells Corvino that some quack's oil has cured his master, and that they are looking for a 'young woman, lusty and full of juice,' to complete the cure:

'Ha'e you no kinswoman?
Godso.—Think, think, think, think, think, think, think, sir.
One o' the doctors offer'd there his daughter.
C. How? *M.* Yes, signior Lupo, the physician.
C. His daughter? *M.* And a virgin, sir. . . . *C.* Wretch!
Covetous wretch!'[4]

Though unreasonably jealous, Corvino is gradually induced to offer his wife. He has given too much already, and would not lose his advantage. He is like a half-ruined gamester, who with a shaking hand throws on the green cloth the remainder of his fortune. He brings the poor sweet woman, weeping and resisting. Excited by his own hidden pain, he becomes furious:

'Be damn'd.
(Heart) I will drag thee hence, home by the hair;
Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up
Thy mouth unto thine ears; and slit thy nose;
Like a raw rotchet—Do not tempt me, come,
Yield, I am loth—(Death!) I will buy some slave

[1] *Volpone*, i. 5. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* ii. 4. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 6.

Whom I will kill, and bind thee to him, alive;
And at my window hang you forth, devising
Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters,
Will eat into thy flesh with aquafortis,
And burning cor'sives, on this stubborn breast.
Now, by the blood thou hast incens'd, I'll do't!
Celia. Sir, what you please, you may, I am your martyr
Cor. Be not thus obstinate; I ha' not deserved it
Think who it is intreats you. Pr'ythee, sweet,
(Good faith), thou shalt have jewels, gowns, attires,
What thou wilt think, and ask. Do but go kiss him,
Or touch him, but. For my sake. At my suit.
This once No? not? I shall remember this.
Will you disgrace me thus? Do you thirst my undoing?'[1]

Mosca turns, the moment before, to Volpone:

'Sir,
Signior Corvino . . . hearing of the consultation had
So lately, for your health, is come to offer,
Or rather, sir, to prostitute.—*C.* Thanks, sweet Mosca.
M. Freely, unask'd, or unintreated. *C.* Well.
M. As the true fervent instance of his love,
His own most fair and proper wife: the beauty
Only of price in Venice. *C.* 'Tis well urg'd.'[2]

Where can we see such blows launched and driven hard, full in the face, by the violent hand of satire? Celia is alone with Volpone, who, throwing off his feigned sickness, comes upon her, 'as fresh, as hot, as high, and in as jovial plight,' as on the gala-days of the Republic, when he acted the part of the lovely Antinous. In his transport he sings a love song; his voluptuousness culminates in poetry; for poetry was then in Italy the blossom of vice. He spreads before her pearls, diamonds, carbuncles. He is in raptures at the sight of the treasures, which he causes to roll and sparkle before her eyes:

'Take these,
And wear, and lose 'em: yet remains an earring
To purchase them again, and this whole state.
A gem but worth a private patrimony,
Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal,
The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
The brains of peacocks, and of estriches
Shall be our food. . . .
Conscience? 'Tis the beggar's virtue. . . .
Thy baths shall be the juice of July flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath

[1] *Volpone*, iii. 7. We pray the reader to pardon us for Ben Jonson's broadness. If I omit it, I cannot depict the sixteenth century. Grant the same indulgence to the historian as to the anatomist.

[2] *Volpone*, iii. 7.

Gather'd in bags, and mixt with Cretan wines.
Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber;
Which we will take, until my roof whirl round
With the vertigo: and my dwarf shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antick,
Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine;
So, of the rest, till we have quite run through,
And wearied all the fables of the gods.'[1]

We recognise Venice in this splendour of debauchery—Venice, the throne of Aretinus, the country of Tintoret and Giorgione. Volpone seizes Celia: 'Yield, or I'll force thee!' But suddenly Bonario, disinherited son of Corbaccio, whom Mosca had concealed there with another design, enters violently, delivers her, wounds Mosca, and accuses Volpone before the tribunal, of imposture and rape.

The three rascals who aim at being his heirs, work together to save Volpone. Corbaccio disavows his son, and accuses him of parricide. Corvino declares his wife an adulteress, the shameless mistress of Bonario. Never on the stage was seen such energy of lying, such open villany. The husband, who knows his wife to be innocent, is the most eager:

'This woman (please your fatherhoods) is a whore,
Of most hot exercise, more than a partrich,
Upon record. 1*st Adv.* No more. *C.* Neighs like a jennet.
Notary. Preserve the honour of the court. *C.* I shall,
And modesty of your most reverend ears.
And yet I hope that I may say, these eyes
Have seen her glew'd unto that piece of cedar,
That fine well-timber'd gallant; and that here
The letters may be read, thorow the horn,
That make the story perfect. . . .
3*d Adv.* His grief hath made him frantic. (*Celia swoons.*)
C. Rare! Prettily feign'd! again!'[2]

They have Volpone brought in, like a dying man; manufacture false 'testimony,' to which Voltore gives weight with his advocate's tongue, with words worth a sequin apiece. They put Celia and Bonario into prison, and Volpone is saved. This public imposture is for him only another comedy, a pleasant pastime, and a masterpiece.

'*Mosca.* To gull the court. *Volpone.* And quite divert the torrent
Upon the innocent. . . .
M. You are not taken with it enough, methinks.
V. O, more than if I had enjoy'd the wench?'[3]

To conclude, he writes a will in Mosca's favour, has his death reported, hides behind a curtain, and enjoys the looks of the would-be heirs.

[1] *Volpone*, iii. 7. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 5. [3] *Ibid.* v. 2.

They had just saved him, which makes the fun all the better; the wickedness will be all the greater and more exquisite. 'Torture 'em rarely,' Volpone says to Mosca. The latter spreads the will on the table, and reads the inventory aloud. 'Turkey carpets nine. Two cabinets, one of ebony, the other, mother-of-pearl. A perfum'd box, made of an onyx.' The heirs are stupefied with disappointment, and Mosca drives them off with insults. He says to Corvino:

> 'Why would you stay here? with what thought, what promise?
> Hear you? do you not know, I know you an ass?
> And that you would most fain have been a wittol,
> If fortune would have let you? That you are
> A declar'd cuckold, on good terms? This pearl,
> You'll say, was yours? Right: this diamond?
> I'll not deny't, but thank you. Much here else?
> It may be so. Why, think that these good works
> May help to hide your bad. . . .
> *Corv.* I am cozen'd, cheated, by a parasite slave;
> Harlot, th' hast gull'd me. *M.* Yes, sir. Stop your mouth,
> Or I shall draw the only tooth is left.
> Are not you he, that filthy covetous wretch,
> With the three legs, that here, in hope of prey,
> Have any time this three years snufft about,
> With your most grov'ling nose, and would have hir'd
> Me to the pois'ning of my patron, sir?
> Are not you he that have to-day in court
> Profess'd the disinheriting of your son?
> Perjur'd yourself? Go home, and die, and stink.'[1]

Volpone goes out disguised, comes to each of them in turn, and succeeds in wringing their hearts. But Mosca, who has the will, acts with a high hand, and demands of Volpone half his fortune. The dispute between the two rascals discovers their impostures, and the master, the servant, with the three would-be heirs, are sent to the galleys, to prison, to the pillory—as Corvino says, to

> 'Have mine eyes beat out with stinking fish,
> Bruis'd fruit, and rotten eggs.—'Tis well. I'm glad,
> I shall not see my shame yet.'[2]

No more vengeful comedy has been written, none more persistently athirst to make vice suffer, to unmask, triumph over, and punish it.

Where can be the gaiety of such a theatre? In caricature and farce. There is a rude gaiety, a sort of physical, external laughter which suits this combative, drinking, blustering mood. It is thus that this mood relaxes from a war-waging and murderous satire; the pastime is appropriate to the manners of the time, excellent to attract men who look upon hanging as a good joke, and laugh to see the Puritans' ears cut. Put yourself for an instant in their place, and you

[1] *Volpone*, v. 3. [2] *Ibid.* v. 12

will think like them, that *The Silent Woman* is a masterpiece. Morose is an old monomaniac, who has a horror of noise, but loves to speak. He inhabits a street so narrow that a carriage cannot enter it. He drives off with his stick the bear-leaders and sword-players, who venture to pass under his windows. He has sent away his servant whose shoes creaked; and Mute, the new one, wears slippers 'soal'd with wool,' and only speaks in a whisper through a tube. Morose ends by forbidding the whisper, and making him reply by signs. For the rest, he is rich he is an uncle, and ill-treats his nephew Sir Dauphine Eugenie, a man of wit, with a lack of money. You see beforehand all the tortures which poor Morose is to suffer. Sir Dauphine finds him a supposed silent woman, the beautiful Epicœne. Morose, enchanted by her brief replies and her voice which he can hardly hear, marries her, to play his nephew a trick. It is his nephew who has played him a trick. As soon as she is married, Epicœne speaks, scolds, argues as loud and as long as a dozen women:

'Why, did you think you had married a statue? or a motion only? one of the French puppets, with the eyes turn'd with a wire? or some innocent out of the hospital, that would stand with her hands thus, and a playse mouth, and look upon you?'[1]

She orders the valets to speak louder; she opens the doors wide to her friends. They arrive in troops, offering their noisy congratulations to Morose. Five or six women's tongues overwhelm him all at once with compliments, questions, advice, remonstrances. A friend of Sir Dauphine comes with a band of music, who play all together, suddenly, with their whole force. 'O, a plot, a plot, a plot, a plot, upon me! This day I shall be their anvil to work on, they will grate me asunder. 'Tis worse than the noise of a saw.'[2] A procession of servants is seen coming, with dishes in their hands; it is the bustle of the tavern which Sir Dauphine is bringing to his uncle. The guests clash the glasses, cry out, drink healths; they have with them a drum and trumpets which make great noise. Morose flees to the top of the house, puts 'a whole nest of night-caps' on his head, and stuffs up his ears. Captain Otter cries, 'Sound, Tritons o' the Thames! *Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero.* 'Villains, murderers, sons of the earth and traitors,' cries Morose from above, 'what do you there?' The racket increases. Then the captain, somewhat 'jovial,' maligns his wife, who falls upon him and gives him a good beating. Blows, cries, music, laughter, resound like thunder. It is the poetry of uproar. Here is a subject to shake rude nerves, and raise with inextinguishable laughter the mighty chests of the companions of Drake and Essex. 'Rogues, hell-hounds, Stentors! . . . They have rent my roof, walls, and all my windows asunder, with their brazen throats!' Morose casts himself on the people with his long sword, breaks the instruments, chases the musicians, disperses the guests amidst

[1] *Epicœne*, iii. 4. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 7.

an inexpressible uproar, gnashing his teeth, looking dreadfully. Afterwards they pronounce him mad, and discuss his madness before him.[1] 'The disease in Greek is called *μανία*, in Latin *insania*, *furor*, *vel ecstasis melancholica*, that is, *egressio*, when a man *ex melancholico evadit fanaticus*. . . . But he may be but *phreneticus* yet, mistress; and *phrenetis* is only *delirium*, or so.' They talk of the books which he must read aloud to cure him. They add, by way of consolation, that his wife talks in her sleep, 'and snores like a porcpisce' 'O, redeem me, fate; redeem me, fate!' cries the poor man.[2] 'For how many causes may a man be divorc'd, nephew?' Sir Dauphine chooses two knaves, and disguises them, one as a priest, the other as a lawyer, who launch at his head Latin terms of civil and canon law, explain to Morose the twelve cases of nullity, jingle in his ears one after another the most barbarous words in their obscure vocabulary, wrangle, and make between them as much noise as a couple of bells in a bell-tower. On their advice he declares himself impotent. The wedding-guests propose to toss him in a blanket; others demand an immediate inquisition. Fall after fall, shame after shame; nothing serves him; his wife declares that she consents to 'take him with all his faults.' The lawyer proposes another legal method; Morose shall obtain a divorce by proving that his wife is faithless. Two boasting knights, who are present, declare that they have been her lovers. Morose, in raptures, casts himself at their knees, and embraces them. Epicœne weeps, and Morose seems to be delivered. Suddenly the lawyer decides that the plan is of no avail, the infidelity having been committed before the marriage. 'O, this is worst of all worst worsts that hell could have devis'd! marry a whore! and so much noise!' There is Morose then, declared impotent and a deceived husband, at his own request, in the eyes of the world, and moreover, married for ever. Sir Dauphine comes in like a clever rascal, and as a succouring deity. 'Allow me but five hundred during life, uncle,' and I free you. Morose signs the deed of gift with alacrity; and his nephew shows him that Epicœne is a boy in disguise.[3] Add to this enchanting farce the funny parts of the two accomplished and gallant knights, who, after having boasted of their bravery, receive gratefully, and before the ladies, flips and kicks.[4] Never was coarse physical laughter more adroitly produced. In this broad coarse gaiety, this excess of noisy transport, you recognise the stout roysterer, the stalwart drinker who swallowed down torrents of Canary, and made the glass windows of the Mermaid shake with his bursts of humour.

V.

Jonson did not go beyond this; he was not a philosopher like Molière, able to grasp and dramatise the crises of human life, education, marriage,

[1] See M. de Pourceaugnac in Molière.

[2] *Epicœne*, iv. 4.

[3] *Ibid.* v. 5.

[4] Polichinelle in *Le Malade imaginaire*; Géronte in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*

sickness, the chief characters of his country and century, the courtier, the tradesman, the hypocrite, the man of the world.[1] He remained on a lower level, in the comedy of plot,[2] the painting of the grotesque,[3] the representation of too transient subjects of ridicule,[4] too general vices.[5] If at times, as in the *Alchemist*, he has succeeded by the perfection of plot and the vigour of satire, he has miscarried more frequently by the ponderousness of his work and the lack of comic lightness. The critic in him mars the artist; his literary calculations strip him of spontaneous invention; he is too much of a writer and moralist, not enough of a mimic and an actor. But he is loftier from another side, for he is a poet; almost all writers, prose-authors, preachers even, were so at the time we speak of. Fancy abounded, as well as the perception of colours and forms, the need and wont of enjoying through the imagination and the eyes. Many of Jonson's pieces, the *Staple of News*, *Cynthia's Revels*, are fanciful and allegorical comedies, like those of Aristophanes. He there dallies with the real, and beyond the real, with characters who are but theatrical masks, abstractions personified, buffooneries, decorations, dances, music, pretty laughing whims of a picturesque and sentimental imagination. Thus, in *Cynthia's Revels*, three children come on 'pleading possession of the cloke' of black velvet, which an actor usually wore when he spoke the prologue. They draw lots for it; one of the losers, in revenge, tells the audience beforehand the incidents of the piece. The others interrupt him at every sentence, put their hands on his mouth, and taking the cloak one after the other, begin the criticism of the spectators and authors. This child's play, these gestures and voices, this little amusing dispute, divert the public from their serious thoughts, and prepare them for the oddities which they are to look upon.

We are in Greece, in the valley of Gargaphie, where Diana[6] has proclaimed 'a solemn revels.' Mercury and Cupid have come down, and begin by quarrelling; the latter says:

'My light feather-heel'd couz, what are you? any more than my uncle Jove's pandar? a lacquey that runs on errands for him, and can whisper a light message to a loose wench with some round volubility? . . . One that sweeps the gods' drinking-room every morning, and sets the cushions in order again, which they threw one at another's head over night?'[7]

These are the gods of good humour. Echo, awoke by Mercury, weeps for the beauteous boy Narcissus:

[1] *L'Ecole des Femmes*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Bourgeois-gentilhomme*, *Le Malade imaginaire*, *Georges Dandin*.

[2] In the style of the *Fourberies de Scapin*.

[3] In the style of the *Fâcheux*.

[4] In the style of the *Précieuses*.

[5] In the style of the plays of Destouches.

[6] By Diana, Queen Elizabeth is meant.

[7] *Cynthia's Revels*, i. 1.

'That trophy of self-love, and spoil of nature,
Who (now transformed into this drooping flower)
Hangs the repentant head, back from the stream. . . .
Witness thy youth's dear sweets, here spent untasted,
Like a fair taper, with his own flame wasted! . . .
And with thy water let this curse remain,
(As an inseparate plague,) that who but tastes
A drop thereof, may, with the instant touch,
Grow dotingly enamour'd on themselves.'[1]

The courtiers and ladies drink thereof, and behold, a sort of review of the follies of the time, arranged, as in Aristophanes, in an improbable farce, a brilliant show. A silly spendthrift, Asotus, wishes to become a man of the court, and of fashionable manners; he takes for his master Amorphus, a learned traveller, expert in gallantry, who, to believe himself, is

'An essence so sublimated and refined by travel . . . able . . . to speak the mere extraction of language; one that . . . was your first that ever enrich'd his country with the true laws of the duello; whose optiques have drunk the spirit of beauty, in some eight-score and eighteen princes' courts, where I have resided, and been there fortunate in the amours of three hundred forty and five ladies (all nobly if not princely descended) . . . in all so happy, as even admiration herself doth seem to fasten her kisses upon me.'[2]

Asotus learns at this good school the language of the court, fortifies himself like other people with quibbles, learned oaths, and metaphors; he fires off in succession supersubtle tirades, and duly imitates the grimaces and tortuous style of his masters. Then, when he has drunk the water of the fountain, becoming suddenly pert and rash, he proposes to all comers a tournament of 'court compliment.' This odd tournament is held before the ladies; it comprises four jousts, and at each the trumpets sound. The combatants perform in succession 'the bare accost; the better regard; the solemn address; and the perfect close.'[3] In this grave buffoonery the courtiers are beaten. The severe Crites, the moralist of the play, copies their language, and pierces them with their own weapons. Already, with grand declamation, he had rebuked them thus:

'O vanity,
How are thy painted beauties doated on,
By light, and empty ideots! how pursu'd
With open and extended appetite!
How they do sweat, and run themselves from breath,
Rais'd on their toes, to catch thy airy forms,
Still turning giddy, till they reel like drunkards,
That buy the merry madness of one hour,
With the long irksomeness of following time!'[4]

To complete the overthrow of the vices, appear two symbolical masques

[1] *Cynthia's Revels*, i. 2. [2] *Ibid.* i. 3. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 5. [4] *Ibid.* i. 5.

representing the contrary virtues. They pass gravely before the spectators, in splendid array, and the noble verses exchanged by the goddess and her companions raise the mind to the lofty regions of serene morality, whither the poet desires to carry us:

> 'Queen, and huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is laid to sleep,
> Seated in thy silver chair,
> State in wonted manner keep. . . .
> Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
> And thy crystal shining quiver;
> Give unto the flying hart
> Space to breathe, how short soever.' [1]

In the end, bidding the dancers to unmask, Cynthia shows that the vices have disguised themselves as virtues. She condemns them to make fit reparation, and to bathe themselves in Helicon. Two by two they go off singing a palinode, whilst the chorus sings the supplication 'Good Mercury defend us.'[2] Is it an opera or a comedy? It is a lyrical comedy; and if we do not discover in it the airy lightness of Aristophanes, at least we encounter, as in the *Birds* and the *Frogs*, the contrasts and medleys of poetic invention, which, through caricature and ode, the real and the impossible, the present and the past, comprehending the four quarters of the globe, simultaneously unites all kinds of incompatibilities, and culls all flowers.

Jonson went further than this, and entered the domain of pure poetry. He wrote delicate, voluptuous, charming love poems, worthy of the ancient idyllic muse.[3] Above all, he was the great, the inexhaustible inventor of Masques, a kind of masquerades, ballets, poetic dances, in which all the magnificence and the imagination of the English Renaissance is displayed. The Greek gods, and all the ancient Olympus, the mythic personages whom the artists of the time delineate in their pictures; the antique heroes of popular legends; all worlds, the actual, the abstract, the divine, the human, the ancient, the modern, are searched by his hands, brought on the stage to furnish costumes, harmonious groups, emblems, songs, whatever can excite, intoxicate the artistic sense. The *élite*, moreover, of the kingdom is there on the stage. They are not buffoons figuring in borrowed clothes, clumsily worn, for which they are still in debt to the tailor; they are ladies of the court, great lords, the queen; in all the splendour of their rank and pride, with real diamonds, bent on displaying their riches, so that the whole splendour of the national life is concentrated in the opera which they enact, like jewels in a casket. What array! what profusion of splendours! what medley of strange characters, gipsies, witches, gods, heroes, pontiffs, gnomes, fantastic beings! How many meta-

[1] *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 6. [2] *Ibid.* v. last scene.
[3] *Celebration of Charis*—*Miscellaneous Poems.*

morphoses, jousts, dances, marriage songs! What variety of scenery, architecture, floating isles, triumphal arches, symbolic spheres! Gold glitters; jewels flash; purple absorbs the lustre-lights in its costly folds; streams of brightness play upon the silken pleats; diamonds twisted, darting flame, clasp the bare bosoms of women; necklets of pearl float, loop after loop, down the silver-sown brocaded dresses; gold embroidery, weaving whimsical arabesques, depicts upon their dresses flowers, fruits and figures, setting picture within picture. The steps of the throne bear groups of Cupids, each with a torch in his hand.[1] On either side the fountains cast up plumes of pearls; the musicians, in purple and scarlet, laurel-crowned, make harmony in the bowers. The trains of masques cross, commingling their groups; 'the one half in orange-tawny and silver, the other in sea-green and silver. The bodies and short skirts (were of) white and gold to both.'

Such pageants Jonson wrote year after year, almost to the end of his life, true eye-feasts, like a procession of Titian. Even when he grew to be old, his imagination, like that of Titian, remained abundant and fresh. Though forsaken, gasping on his bed, feeling the approach of death, in his supreme bitterness he did not lose his tone, but wrote *The Sad Shepherd*, the most graceful and pastoral of his pieces. Consider that this beautiful dream was dreamed in a sick-chamber, to an accompaniment of bottles, physic, doctors, with a nurse at his side, amidst the anxieties of poverty and the choking-fits of a dropsy! He is transported to a green forest, in the days of Robin Hood, amidst jovial chace and the great barking greyhounds. There are the malicious fairies, the Oberon and Titania, who lead men aflounder in misfortune. There are open-souled lovers, the Daphne and Chloe, tasting with awe the painful sweetness of the first kiss. There lived Earine, whom the stream has 'suck'd in,' whom her lover, in his madness, will not cease to lament:

> 'Earine,
> Who had her very being, and her name
> With the first knots or buddings of the spring,
> Born with the primrose or the violet,
> Or earliest roses blown: when Cupid smil'd,
> And Venus led the graces out to dance,
> And all the flowers and sweets in nature's lap
> Leap'd out, and made their solemn conjuration
> To last but while she liv'd.' . . .[2]
> 'But she, as chaste as was her name, Earine,
> Dy'd undeflower'd: and now her sweet soul hovers
> Here in the air above us.'[3]

Above the poor old paralytic artist, poetry still hovers like a haze of light. Yes, he had cumbered himself with science, clogged himself with

[1] *Masque of Beauty.* [2] *The Sad Shepherd*, i. 5. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 2.

theories, constituted himself theatrical critic and social censor, filled his soul with unrelenting indignation, fostered a combative and morose disposition; but heaven's dreams never deserted him. He is the brother of Shakspeare.

VI.

So now at last we are in the presence of one, whom we perceived before us through all the vistas of the Renaissance, like some vast oak to which all the forest ways converge. I will treat of Shakspeare by himself. In order to take him in completely, we must have a wide and open space. And yet how shall we comprehend him? how lay bare his inner constitution? Lofty words, eulogies, all is vain by his side; he needs no praise, but comprehension merely; and he can only be comprehended by the aid of science. As the complicated revolutions of the heavenly bodies become intelligible only by use of a superior calculus, as the delicate transformations of vegetation and life need for their comprehension the intervention of the most difficult chemical processes, so the great works of art can be interpreted only by the most advanced psychological systems; and we need the loftiest of all these to attain to Shakspeare's level—to the level of his age and his work, of his genius and of his art.

After all practical experience and accumulated observations of the soul, we find as the result that wisdom and knowledge are in man only effects and fortuities. Man has no permanent and distinct force to secure truth to his intelligence, and common sense to his conduct. On the contrary, he is naturally unreasonable and deceived. The parts of his inner mechanism are like the wheels of clockwork, which of themselves go blindly, carried away by impulse and weight, and which yet sometimes, by virtue of a certain unison, end by indicating the hour. This final intelligent motion is not natural, but fortuitous; not spontaneous, but forced; not inherent, but acquired. The clock did not always go regularly; it had to be regulated little by little, with much difficulty. Its regularity is not ensured; it may go wrong in an instant. Its regularity is not complete; it only approximately marks the time. The mechanical force of each piece is always present, ready to drag all the rest from their proper action, and to disarrange the whole agreement. So ideas, once in the mind, pull each blindly and separately, and their imperfect agreement threatens confusion every moment. Strictly speaking, man is idiotic, as the body is sick, by nature; reason and health come to us as a momentary success, a lucky accident.[1] If we forget this, it is because we are now regulated, dulled, deadened, and because our internal motion has become gradually, by friction and

[1] This idea may be expanded psychologically: external perception, memory, are real hallucinations, etc. This is the analytical aspect; under another aspect reason and health are the natural goals.

tension, half harmonised with the motion of external things. But this is only a semblance; and the dangerous primitive forces remain untamed and independent under the order, which seems to restrain them. Let a great danger arise, a revolution break out, they will make an eruption and an explosion, almost as terribly as in the earlier times. For an idea is not a mere inner mark, employed to designate one aspect of things, inert, always ready to fall into order with other similar ones, so as to make an exact whole. However it may be reduced and disciplined, it still retains a visible tinge which shows its likeness to an hallucination; a degree of individual persistence which shows its likeness to a monomania; a network of particular affinities which shows its likeness to the ravings of delirium. Being such, it is beyond question the rudiment of a nightmare, a habit, an absurdity. Let it become once developed in its entirety, as its tendency leads it,[1] and you will find that it is essentially an active and complete image, a vision drawing along with it a train of dreams and sensations, which increases of itself, suddenly, by a sort of manifold and absorbing growth, and which ends by possessing, shaking, exhausting the whole man. After this, another, perhaps entirely opposite, and so on successively: there is nothing else in man, no free and distinct power; he is in himself but the process of these headlong impulses and swarming imaginations: civilisation has mutilated, attenuated, but not destroyed them; fits, shocks, transports, sometimes at long intervals a sort of transient partial equilibrium: this is his real life, the life of a lunatic, who now and then simulates reason, but who is in reality 'such stuff as dreams are made on;'[2] and this is man, as Shakspeare has conceived him. No writer, not even Molière, has penetrated so far beneath the semblance of common sense and logic in which the human machine is enclosed, in order to crush the brute powers which constitute its substance and its mainspring.

How did Shakspeare succeed? and by what extraordinary instinct did he divine the remote conclusions, the deepest insights of physiology and psychology? He had a complete imagination; his whole genius is in that single word. A small word, which seems commonplace and hollow. Let us examine it closer, to understand what it contains. When we think a thing, we, ordinary men, we only think a part of it; we see one side, some isolated mark, sometimes two or three marks together; for what is beyond, our sight fails us; the infinite network of its infinitely-complicated and multiplied properties escapes us; we feel vaguely that there is something beyond our shallow ken, and this vague suspicion is the only part of our idea which at all reveals to us the great beyond. We are like tyro-naturalists, quiet people of limited understanding, who, wishing to represent an animal, recall its name and ticket, with some indistinct image of its hide and figure; but

[1] See Spinoza and D. Stewart: Conception in its natural state is belief.

[2] *Tempest*, iv. 1.

their mind rests there If it so happens that they wish to complete their knowledge, they lead their memory, by regular classifications, over the principal characters of the beast, and slowly, discursively, gradually, bring at last the bare anatomy before their eyes. To this their idea is reduced, even when perfected; to this also most frequently is our conception reduced, even when elaborated. What a distance there is between this conception and the object, how imperfectly and meanly the one represents the other, to what extent this mutilates that; how the consecutive idea, disjointed in little, regularly arranged and inert fragments, represents but slightly the complete, organised, living thing, ever in action, and ever transformed, words cannot explain. Picture to yourself, instead of this poor dry idea, propped up by a miserable mechanical linkwork of thought, the complete idea, that is, an inner representation, so abundant and full, that it exhausts all the properties and relations of the object, all its inward and outward aspects; that it exhausts them instantaneously; that it conceives of the animal all at once, its colour, the play of the light upon its skin, its form, the quivering of its outstretched limbs, the flash of its eyes, and at the same time its passion of the moment, its excitement, its dash; and beyond this its instincts, their composition, their causes, their history; so that the hundred thousand characteristics which make up its condition and its nature find their analogues in the imagination which concentrates and reflects them: there you have the artist's conception, the poet's—Shakspeare's; so superior to that of the logician, of the mere savant or man of the world, the only one capable of penetrating to the basis of things, of extricating the inner from beneath the outer man, of feeling through sympathy, and imitating without effort, the disorderly roundabout of human imaginations and impressions, of reproducing life with its infinite fluctuations, its apparent contradictions, its concealed logic; in short, to create as nature creates. This is what is done by the other artists of this age; they have the same kind of mind, and the same idea of life: you will find in Shakspeare only the same faculties, with a still stronger impulse; the same idea, with a still more prominent relief

CHAPTER IV.

Shakspeare.

I. Life and character of Shakspeare—Family—Youth—Marriage—He becomes an actor—*Adonis*—Sonnets—Loves—Humour—Conversation—Melancholy—The constitution of the productive and sympathetic character—Prudence—Fortune—Retirement.

II. Style—Images—Excesses—Incongruities—Copiousness—Difference between the creative and analytic conception.

III. Manners—Familiar intercourse—Violent bearing—Harsh language—Conversation and action—Agreement of manners and style.

IV. The *dramatis personæ*—All of the same family—Brutes and idiots—Caliban, Ajax, Cloten, Polonius, the Nurse—How the mechanical imagination can precede or survive reason.

V. Men of wit—Difference between the wit of reasoners and of artists—Mercutio, Beatrice, Rosalind, Benedict, the clowns—Falstaff.

VI. Women—Desdemona, Virginia, Juliet, Miranda, Imogen, Cordelia, Ophelia, Volumnia—How Shakspeare represents love—Why he bases virtue on instinct or passion.

VII. Villains—Iago, Richard III.—How excessive lusts and the lack of conscience are the natural province of the impassioned imagination.

VIII. Principal characters—Excess and disease of the imagination—Lear, Othello, Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Macbeth, Hamlet—Comparison of Shakspeare's psychology with that of the French tragic authors.

IX. Fancy—Agreement of imagination with observation in Shakspeare—Interesting nature of sentimental and romantic comedy—*As you Like 't*—Idea of existence—*Midsummer Night's Dream*—Idea of love—Harmony of all parts of the work—Harmony between the artist and his work.

I AM about to describe an extraordinary species of mind, perplexing to all the French modes of analysis and reasoning, all-powerful, excessive, equally master of the sublime and the base; the most creative that ever engaged in the exact copy of the details of actual existence, in the dazzling caprice of fancy, in the profound complications of superhuman passions; a nature poetical, immoral, inspired, superior to reason by the sudden revelations of his seer's-madness; so extreme in joy and pain, so abrupt of gait, so stormy and impetuous in his transports, that this great age alone could have cradled such a child.

I.

Of Shakspeare all came from within—I mean from his soul and his genius; external circumstances contributed but slightly to his development.[1] He was intimately bound up with his age; that is, he knew by experience the manners of country, court, and town; he had visited the heights, depths, the middle regions of the condition of mankind; nothing more. For the rest, his life was commonplace; the irregularities, troubles, passions, successes through which he passed, were, on the whole, such as we meet with everywhere else.[2] His father, a glover and wool stapler, in very easy circumstances, having married a sort of country heiress, had become high-bailiff and chief alderman in his little town; but when Shakspeare reached the age of fourteen he was on the verge of ruin, mortgaging his wife's property, obliged to resign his municipal offices, and to remove his son from school to assist him in his business. The young fellow applied himself to it as well as he could, not without some scrapes and escapades: if we are to believe tradition, he was one of the thirsty souls of the place, with a mind to support the reputation of his little town in its drinking powers. Once, they say, having been beaten at Bideford in one of these ale-bouts, he returned staggering from the fight, or rather could not return, and passed the night with his comrades under an apple-tree by the roadside. Without doubt he had already begun to write verses, to rove about like a genuine poet, taking part in the noisy rustic feasts, the gay pastoral plays, the rich and bold outbreak of pagan and poetical life, as it was then to be found in an English village. At all events, he was not a pattern of propriety, and his passions were as precocious as they were reckless. While not yet nineteen years old, he married the daughter of a substantial yeoman, about eight years older than himself—and not too soon, as she was about to become a mother.[3] Other of his outbreaks were no more fortunate. It seems that he was fond of poaching, after the manner of the time, being 'much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits,' says the Rev. Richard Davies;[4] 'particularly from Sir ——- Lucy, who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly the country; . . . but his reveng was so great, that he is his Justice Clodpate.' Moreover, about this time Shakspeare's father was in prison, his affairs were desperate, and he himself had three children, following one close upon the other; he must live, and life was hardly possible for him in his native town. He went to

[1] Halliwell's *Life of Shakspeare.*

[2] Born 1564, died 1616. He adapted plays as early as 1591. The first play entirely from his pen appeared in 1593.—PAYNE COLLIER.

[3] Mr. Halliwell and other commentators try to prove that at this time the preliminary trothplight was regarded as the real marriage; that this trothplight had taken place, and that there was therefore no irregularity in Shakspeare's conduct. Halliwell, 123.

London, and took to the stage: took the lowest parts, was a 'servant in the theatre, that is, an apprentice, or perhaps a supernumerary. They even said that he had begun still lower, and that to earn his bread he had held gentlemen's horses at the door of the theatre.[1] At all events he tasted misery, and felt, not in imagination but in fact, the sharp thorn of care, humiliation, disgust, forced labour, public discredit, the power of the people. He was a comedian, one of 'His Majesty's poor players,'[2]—a sad trade, degraded in all ages by the contrasts and the falsehoods inseparable from it; still more degraded then by the brutalities of the crowd, who not seldom would stone the actors, and by the severities of the magistrates, who would sometimes condemn them to lose their ears. He felt it, and spoke of it with bitterness:

'Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear.'[3]

And again:

'When in disgrace with fortune[4] and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed. . . .
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in those thoughts myself almost despising.'[5]

We shall find further on the traces of this long-enduring disgust, in his melancholy characters, as where he says:

'For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?'[6]

But the worst of this degraded position is, that it eats into the soul. In the company of buffoons we become buffoons: it is vain to wish to keep clean, if you live in a dirty place, it cannot be. No matter if a man braces himself; necessity drives and soils him. The machinery of the decorations, the tawdriness and medley of the costumes, the smell of

[1] All these anecdotes are traditions, and consequently more or less doubtful; but the other facts are authentic.

[2] Terms of an extant document. He is named along with Burbadge and Greene.

[3] *Sonnet* 110.

[4] See *Sonnets* 91 and 111; also *Hamlet*, iii. 2. Many of Hamlet's words would come better from the mouth of an actor than a prince. See also the 66th *Sonnet*, 'Tired with all these.'

[5] *Sonnet* 29.

[6] *Hamlet*, iii. 1.

the tallow and the candles, in contrast with the parade of refinement and loftiness, all the cheats and sordidness of the representation, the bitter alternative of hissing or applause, the keeping of the highest and lowest company, the habit of sporting with human passions, easily unhinge the soul, drive it down the slope of excess, tempt it to loose manners, green-room adventures, the loves of strolling actresses. Shakspeare escaped them no more than Molière, and grieved for it, like Molière

> 'O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds.'[1]

They used to relate in London, how his comrade Burbadge, who played Richard III., having a rendezvous with the wife of a citizen, Shakspeare went before, was well received, and was pleasantly occupied when Burbadge arrived, to whom he sent the message, that William the Conqueror came before Richard III.[2] You may take this as an example of the tricks and somewhat coarse intrigues which are planned, and follow in quick succession, on this stage. Outside the theatre he lived with fashionable young nobles, Pembroke, Montgomery, Southampton,[3] and others, whose hot and licentious youth fed his imagination and senses by the example of Italian pleasures and elegances. Add to this the rapture and transport of poetical nature, and this afflux, this boiling over of all the powers and desires which takes place in brains of this kind, when the world for the first time opens before them, and you will understand the *Venus and Adonis*, 'the first heir of his invention.' In fact, it is a first cry, a cry in which the whole man is displayed. Never was seen a heart so quivering to the touch of beauty, of beauty of every kind, so ravished with the freshness and splendour of things so eager and so excited in adoration and enjoyment, so violently and entirely carried to the very limit of voluptuousness. His Venus is unique; no painting of Titian's has a more brilliant and delicious colouring;[4] no strumpet-goddess of Tintoret or Giorgione is more soft and beautiful:

> 'With blindfold fury she begins to forage,
> Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil. . . .
> And glutton-like she feeds, yet never filleth;
> Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,
> Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;
> Whose vulture thought doth pitch the price so high,
> That she will draw his lips' rich treasure dry.'[5]

[1] *Sonnet* 111.

[2] Anecdote written in 1602 on the authority of Tooley the actor.

[3] The Earl of Southampton was nineteen years old when Shakspeare dedicated his *Adonis* to him.

[4] See Titian's picture, Loves of the Gods, at Blenheim.

[5] *Venus and Adonis*, *v.* 548–553.

'Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast,
Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone,
Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
Till either gorge be stuff'd or prey be gone;
Even so she kiss'd his brow, his cheek, his chin,
And where she ends she doth anew begin.' [1]

All is taken by storm, the senses first, the eyes dazzled by carnal beauty, but the heart also from whence the poetry overflows; the fulness of youth inundates even inanimate things; the landscape looks charming amidst the rays of the rising sun, the air, saturated with brightness, makes a gala-day:

'Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breas
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold
That cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold.' [2]

An admirable debauch of imagination and rapture, yet disquieting; for such a mood will carry one a long way.[3] No fair and frail dame in London was without *Adonis* on her table.[4] Perhaps he perceived that he had transcended the bounds, for the tone of his next poem, the *Rape of Lucrece*, is quite different; but as he had already a spirit wide enough to embrace at the same time, as he did afterwards in his dramas, the two extremes of things, he continued none the less to follow his bent. The 'sweet abandonment of love' was the great occupation of his life; he was tender-hearted, and he was a poet: nothing more is required to be smitten, deceived, to suffer, to traverse without pause the circle of illusions and pains, which whirls and whirls round, and never ends.

He had many loves of this kind, amongst others one for a sort of Marion Delorme, a miserable blind despotic passion, of which he felt the oppression and the shame, but from which nevertheless he could not and would not deliver himself. Nothing can be sadder than his confessions, or mark better the madness of love, and the sentiment of human weakness:

'When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies.' [5]

So said Alceste of Célimène; [6] but what a soiled Célimène is the creature before whom Shakspeare kneels, with as much of scorn as of desire!

'Those lips of thine,
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments

[1] *Venus and Adonis*, *v.* 55–60. [2] *Ibid. v.* 853–858.
[3] Compare the first pieces of Alfred de Musset, *Contes d'Italie et d'Espagne.*
[4] Crawley, quoted by Ph. Chasles, *Etudes sur Shakspeare.* [5] *Sonnet* 138.
[6] Two characters in Molière's *Misanthrope.* The scene referred to is Act v. sc. 7.—Tr.

And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine,
Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee.'[1]

This is plain-speaking and deep shamelessness of soul, such as we find only in the stews; and these are the intoxications, the outbreaks, the delirium into which the most refined artists fall, when they resign their own noble hand to these soft, voluptuous, and clinging ones. They are higher than princes, and they descend to the lowest depths of passion. Good and evil then lose their names; all things are inverted:

'How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;
Naming thy name blesses an ill report.'[2]

What are proof, reason, the will, honour itself, when the passion is so absorbing? What, think you, can be said further to a man who answers, 'I know all that you are going to say, and what does it all amount to?' Great loves are inundations, which drown all repugnance and all delicacy of soul, all preconceived opinions and all accepted principles. Thenceforth the heart is found dead to all ordinary pleasures; it can only feel and breathe on one side. Shakspeare envies the keys of the instrument over which his mistress' fingers run. If he looks at flowers, it is she whom he pictures beyond them; and the mad splendours of dazzling poetry flood him repeatedly, as soon as he thinks of those glowing black eyes:

'From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.'[3]

He saw none of it:

'Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose.'[4]

All this sweetness of spring was but her perfume and her shade:

'The forward violet thus I did chide:
"Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
If not from my love's breath? The purple pride,
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells
In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed."

[1] *Sonnet* 142.
[2] *Sonnet* 95.
[3] *Sonnet* 98.
[4] *Ibid.*

The lily I condemned for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair:
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair:
A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both
And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath; . . .
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see
But sweet or colour it had stol'n from thee.'[1]

Passionate trifles, delicious affectations, worthy of Heine and the contemporaries of Dante, which tell us of long rapturous dreams centred around one object. Under a domination so imperious and sustained, what sentiment could maintain its ground? That of family? He was married and had children,—a family which he went to see 'once a year;' and it was probably on his return from one of these journeys that he used the words above quoted. Conscience? 'Love is too young to know what conscience is.' Jealousy and anger?

'For, thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason.'[2]

Repulses?

'He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.'[3]

He is no longer young; she loves another, a handsome, young, light-haired fellow, his own dearest friend, whom he has presented to her, and whom she wishes to seduce:

'Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side.'[4]

And when she has succeeded in this,[5] he dares not confess it to himself, but suffers all, like Molière. What wretchedness there is in these trifles of every-day life! How man's thoughts instinctively place by Shakspeare's side the great unhappy French poet (Molière), also a philosopher by nature, but more of a professional laugher, a mocker of passionate old men, a bitter railer at deceived husbands, who, after having played one of his most approved comedies, said aloud to a companion, 'My dear friend, I am in despair; my wife does not love me!' Neither glory, nor work, nor invention satisfy these vehement

[1] *Sonnet* 99. [2] *Sonnet* 141. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Sonnet* 144; also the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 2.

[5] This new interpretation of the *Sonnets* is due to the ingenious and learned conjectures of M. Ph. Chasles.—For a short history of these *Sonnets*, see Dyce's *Shakspeare*, i. pp. 96–102. This learned editor says: 'I contend that allusions scattered through the whole series are not to be hastily referred to the personal circumstances of Shakspeare.'—TR.

souls; love alone can fill them, because, with their senses and heart, it contents also their brain; and all the powers of man, imagination like the rest, find in it their concentration and their employment. 'Love is my sin,' he said, as did Musset and Heine; and in the *Sonnets* we find traces of yet other passions, equally abandoned; one in particular, seemingly for a great lady. The first half of his dramas, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, preserve the warm imprint more completely; and we have only to consider his latest women's character,[1] to see with what exquisite tenderness, what full adoration, he loved them to the end.

In this is all his genius; his was one of those delicate souls which, like a perfect instrument of music, vibrate of themselves at the slightest touch. This fine sensibility was the first thing observed in him. 'My darling Shakspeare,' 'Sweet Swan of Avon:' these words of Ben Jonson only confirm what his contemporaries reiterate. He was affectionate and kind, 'civil in demeanour, and excellent in the qualitie he professes;'[2] if he had the transports, he had also the effusion of true artists; he was loved, men were delighted in his company; nothing is more sweet or engaging than this charm, this half-feminine abandonment in a man. His wit in conversation was ready, ingenious, nimble; his gaiety brilliant; his imagination easy, and so copious, that, as his comrades tell us, he never erased what he had written—at least when he wrote out a scene for the second time: it was the idea which he would change, not the words, by an after-glow of poetic thought, not with a painful tinkering of the verse. All these characteristics are combined in a single one: he had a sympathetic genius; I mean that naturally he knew how to forget himself and become transfused into all the objects which he conceived. Look around you at the great authors of your time, try to approach them, to become acquainted with

[1] Miranda, Desdemona, Viola. The following are the first words of the Duke in *Twelfth Night*:—

'If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute; so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high-fantastical.'

[2] H. Chettle, in repudiating Greene's sarcasm, attributed to him.

them, to see them as they think, and you will observe the full force of this word. By an extraordinary instinct, they put themselves at once in the position of existences: men, animals, flowers, plants, landscapes, whatever the objects are, living or not, they feel by intuition the forces and tendencies which produce the visible external; and their soul, infinitely complex, becomes by its ceaseless metamorphoses, a sort of abstract of the universe. This is why they seem to live more than other men; they have no need to be taught, they divine. I have seen such a man, apropos of a piece of armour, a costume, a collection of furniture, enter into the middle-age more deeply than three savants together. They reconstruct, as they build, naturally, surely, by an inspiration which is a winged chain of reasoning. Shakspeare had only an imperfect education, 'small Latin and less Greek,' barely French and Italian,[1] nothing else; he had not travelled, he had only read the current literature, he had picked up a few law words in the court of his little town; reckon up, if you can, all that he knew of man and of history. These men see more objects at a time; they grasp them more closely than other men, more quickly and thoroughly; their mind is full, and runs over. They do not rest in simple reasoning; at every idea their whole being, reflections, images, emotions, are set aquiver. See them at it; they gesticulate, mimic their thought, brim over with comparisons; even in their talk they are imaginative and original, with familiarity and boldness of speech, now happily, always irregularly, according to the whims and starts of the adventurous improvisation. The sway, the brilliancy of their language is marvellous; so are their fits, the wide leaps with which they couple widely-removed ideas, annihilating distance, passing from pathos to humour, from vehemence to gentleness. This extraordinary rapture is the last thing to quit them. If perchance ideas fail, or if their melancholy is too harsh, they still speak and produce, even if it be buffooneries; they become clowns, though at their own expense, and to their own hurt. I know one who will mutter bad puns when he thinks he is dying, or has a mind to kill himself; the inner wheel continues to turn, even upon nothing, that wheel which man must needs see ever turning, even though it tear him as it turns; his clown-tricks are an outlet; you will find him, this inextinguishable fellow, this ironical puppet, at Ophelia's tomb, at Cleopatra's death-bed, at Juliet's funeral. High or low, these men must always be at some extreme. They feel their good and their ill too deeply; they expand the state of their soul too widely, by a sort of involuntary novel. After the scandals and the disgusts by which they debase themselves beyond measure, they rise and become exalted in a marvellous fashion, even trembling with pride and joy. 'Haply,' says Shakspeare, after one of these dull moods:

[1] Dyce, *Shakspeare*, i. 27: 'Of French and Italian, I apprehend, he knew but little.'—TR.

'Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.'[1]

Then all fades away, as in a grate where a stronger flame than usual has left no substantial fuel behind it.

'That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang,
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.'[2] . . .
'No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot
If thinking on me then should make you woe.'[3]

These sudden alternations of joy and sadness, divine transports and deep melancholies, exquisite tenderness and womanly depressions, depict the poet, extreme in emotions, ceaselessly troubled with grief or merriment, sensible of the slightest shock, more strong, more dainty in enjoyment and suffering than other men, capable of more intense and sweeter dreams, within whom is stirred an imaginary world of graceful or terrible beings, all impassioned like their author.

Such as I have described him, however, he found his resting-place. Early, at least from an external point, he settled down to an orderly, sensible, citizen-like existence, engaged in business, provident of the future. He remained on the stage for at least seventeen years, though taking secondary parts;[4] he sets his wits at the same time to the touching up of plays with so much activity, that Greene called him 'an upstart crow beautified with our feathers; . . . an absolute *Johannes factotum*, in his owne conceyt the onely shake-scene in a countrey.'[5] At the age of thirty-three he had amassed enough to buy at Stratford a house with two barns and two gardens, and he went on steadier and steadier in the same course. A man attains only to easy circumstances by his own labour; if he gains wealth, it is by making others labour for him. This is why, to the trades of actor and author, Shakspeare added those of manager and director of a theatre. He acquired a partial proprietorship in the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, farmed

[1] *Sonnet* 29. [2] *Sonnet* 73. [3] *Sonnet* 71.
[4] The part in which he excelled was that of the ghost in *Hamlet*.
[5] Greene's *A Groatsworth of Wit*, etc.

tithes, bought large pieces of land, more houses, gave a dowry to his daughter Susanna, and finally retired to his native town on his property, in his own house, like a good landlord, an honest citizen, who manages his fortune fitly, and takes his share of municipal work. He had an income of two or three hundred pounds, which would be equivalent to about eight or twelve hundred at the present time, and according to tradition, lived cheerfully and on good terms with his neighbours; at all events, it does not seem that he thought much about his literary glory, for he did not even take the trouble to collect and publish his works. One of his daughters married a physician, the other a wine merchant; the last did not even know how to sign her name. He lent money, and cut a good figure in this little world. Strange close; one which at first sight resembles more that of a shopkeeper than of a poet. Must we attribute it to that English instinct which places happiness in the life of a country gentleman and a landlord with a good rent-roll, well connected, surrounded by comforts, who quietly rejoices in his settled respectability,[1] his domestic authority, and his county standing? Or rather, was Shakspeare, like Voltaire, a common-sense man, though of an imaginative brain, keeping a sound judgment under the sparkling of his genius, prudent from scepticism, economical through lack of independence, and capable, after going the round of human ideas, of deciding with Candide,[2] that the best thing one can do is 'to cultivate one's garden?' I had rather think, as his full and solid head suggests,[3] that by the mere force of his overflowing imagination he escaped, like Goethe, the perils of an overflowing imagination; that in depicting passion, he succeeded, like Goethe, in quelling passion in his own case; that the lava did not break out in his conduct, because it found issue in his poetry; that his theatre redeemed his life; and that, having passed by sympathy, through every kind of folly and wretchedness that is incident to human existence, he was able to settle down amidst them with a calm and melancholy smile, listening, for distraction, to the aerial music of the fancies in which he revelled.[4] I am willing to believe, lastly, that in frame as in the rest, he belonged to his great generation and his great age; that with him, as with Rabelais, Titian, Michael Angelo, and Rubens, the solidity of his muscles balanced the sensibility of his nerves; that in those days the human machine, more severely tried and more firmly constructed, could withstand the storms of passion and the fire of inspiration; that soul and body were still at equilibrium; that genius was then a blossom, and not, as now, a disease. Of all this we can but conjecture: if we would see the man more closely, we must seek him in his works.

[1] 'He was a respectable man.' 'A good word; what does it mean?' 'He kept a gig.'—(From Thurtell's trial for the murder of Weare.)

[2] The model of an optimist, the hero of one of Voltaire's tales.—TR.

[3] See his portraits, and in particular his bust.

[4] Especially in his later plays. *Tempest, Twelfth Night.*

II.

Let us then look for the man, and in his style. The style explains the work; whilst showing the principal features of the genius, it infers the rest. When we have once grasped the dominant faculty, we see the whole artist developed like a flower.

Shakspeare imagines with copiousness and excess; he spreads metaphors profusely over all he writes; every instant abstract ideas are changed into images; it is a series of paintings which is unfolded in his mind. He does not seek them, they come of themselves; they crowd within him, covering his arguments; they dim with their brightness the pure light of logic. He does not labour to explain or prove; picture on picture, image on image, he is for ever copying the strange and splendid visions which are engendered one within another, and are heaped up within him. Compare to our dull writers this passage, which I take at hazard from a tranquil dialogue:

> 'The single and peculiar life is bound,
> With all the strength and ardour of the mind,
> To keep itself from noyance; but much more
> That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
> The lives of many. The cease of majesty
> Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
> What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
> Each small annexment, petty consequence,
> Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
> Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.'[1]

Here we have three successive images to express the same thought. It is a whole blossoming; a bough grows from the trunk, from that another, which is multiplied into numerous fresh branches. Instead of a smooth road, traced by a regular line of dry and well-fixed stakes, you enter a wood, crowded with interwoven trees and luxuriant bushes, which conceal you and close your path, which delight and dazzle your eyes by the magnificence of their verdure and the wealth of their bloom. You are astonished at first, modern mind that you are, business man, used to the clear dissertations of classical poetry; you become cross; you think the author is joking, and that through self-esteem and bad taste he is misleading you and himself in his garden thickets. By no means; if he speaks thus, it is not from choice, but of necessity; metaphor is not his whim, but the form of his thought. In the height of passion, he imagines still. When Hamlet, in despair, remembers his father's noble form, he sees the mythological pictures with which the taste of the age filled the very streets:

[1] *Hamlet*, iii. 3.

A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.'[1]

This charming vision, in the midst of a bloody invective, proves that there lurks a painter underneath the poet. Involuntarily and out of season, he tears off the tragic mask which covered his face; and the reader discovers, behind the contracted features of this terrible mask, a graceful and inspired smile of which he had not dreamed.

Such an imagination must needs be vehement. Every metaphor is a convulsion. Whosoever involuntarily and naturally transforms a dry idea into an image, has his brain on fire: true metaphors are flaming apparitions, which are like a picture in a flash of lightning. Never, I think, in any nation of Europe, or in any age of history, has so deep a passion been seen. Shakspeare's style is a compound of furious expressions. No man has submitted words to such a contortion. Mingled contrasts, raving exaggerations, apostrophes, exclamations, the whole fury of the ode, inversion of ideas, accumulation of images, the horrible and the divine, jumbled into the same line; it seems to my fancy as though he never writes a word without shouting it. 'What have I done?' the queen asks Hamlet. He answers:

'Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.'[2]

It is the style of phrensy. Yet I have not given all. The metaphors are all exaggerated, the ideas all verge on the absurd. All is transformed and disfigured by the whirlwind of passion. The contagion of the crime, which he denounces, has marred his whole nature. He no longer sees anything in the world but corruption and lying. To vilify the virtuous were little; he vilifies virtue herself. Inanimate things are sucked into the whirl of grief. The sky's red tint at sunset, the pallid shade spread by night over the landscape, become the blush and the pallor of shame, and the wretched man who speaks and weeps sees the whole world totter with him in the dimness of despair.

Hamlet, it will be said, is half-mad; this explains his vehemence of expression. The truth is that Hamlet, here, is Shakspeare. Be the situation terrible or peaceful, whether he is engaged on an invective or

[1] Act iii. Sc. 4. [2] *Ibid.*

a conversation, the style is excessive throughout. Shakspeare never sees things tranquilly. All the powers of his mind are concentrated in the present image or idea. He is buried and absorbed in it. With such a genius, we are on the brink of an abyss; the eddying water dashes in headlong, devouring whatever objects it meets, bringing them to light again, if at all, transformed and mutilated. We pause stupefied before these convulsive metaphors, which might have been written by a fevered hand in a night's delirium, which gather a pageful of ideas and pictures in half a sentence, which scorch the eyes they would enlighten. Words lose their sense; constructions are put out of joint; paradoxes of style, apparently false expressions, which a man might occasionally venture upon with diffidence in the transport of his rapture, become the ordinary language; he dazzles, he repels, he terrifies, he disgusts, he oppresses; his verses are a piercing and sublime song, pitched in too high a key, above the reach of our organs, which offends our ears, of which our mind alone can divine the justice and beauty.

Yet this is little; for that singular force of concentration is redoubled by the suddenness of the dash which it displays. In Shakspeare there is no preparation, no adaptation, no development, no care to make himself understood. Like a too fiery and powerful horse, he bounds, but cannot run. He bridges in a couple of words an enormous interval; is at the two poles in a single instant. The reader vainly looks for the intermediate track; confounded by these prodigious leaps, he wonders by what miracle the poet has entered upon a new idea the very moment when he quitted the last, seeing perhaps between the two images a long scale of transitions, which we pace painfully step by step, but which he has spanned in a stride. Shakspeare flies, we creep. Hence comes a style made up of conceits, bold images shattered in an instant by others still bolder, barely indicated ideas completed by others far removed, no visible connexion, but a visible incoherence; at every step we halt, the track failing; and there, far above us, lo, stands the poet, and we find that we have ventured in his footsteps, through a craggy land, full of precipices, which he threads, as if it were a straightforward road, but on which our greatest efforts barely carry us along.

What will you think, further, if we observe that these vehement expressions, so unexpected, instead of following one after the other, slowly and with effort, are hurled out by hundreds, with an impetuous ease and abundance, like the bubbling waves from a welling spring, which are heaped together, rise one above another, and find no place wide enough to spread themselves and fall? You may find in *Romeo and Juliet* a score of examples of this inexhaustible inspiration. The two lovers pile up an infinite mass of metaphors, impassioned exaggerations, clenches, contorted phrases, amorous extravagances. Their language is like the trill of nightingales. Shakspeare's wits, Mercutio, Beatrice, Rosalind, his clowns, buffoons, sparkle with far fetched jokes, which

rattle out like a musketry-fire. There is none of them but provides enough play of words to stock a whole theatre. Lear's curses, or Queen Margaret's, would suffice for all the madmen in an asylum, or all the oppressed of the earth. The sonnets are a delirium of ideas and images, turned out with an energy enough to make a man giddy. His first poem, *Venus and Adonis*, is the sensual ecstasy of a Correggio, insatiable and excited. This exuberant fecundity intensifies qualities already in excess, and multiplies a hundred-fold the luxuriance of metaphor, the incoherence of style, and the unbridled vehemence of expression.[1]

All that I have said may be compressed into a few words. Objects were taken into his mind organised and complete; they pass into ours disjointed, decomposed, fragmentarily. He thought in the lump, we think piecemeal; hence his style and our style—two languages not to be reconciled. We, for our part, writers and reasoners, can note precisely by a word each isolated fraction of an idea, and represent the due order of its parts by the due order of our expressions. We advance gradually; we affiliate, go down to the roots, try and treat our words as numbers, our sentences as equations; we employ but general terms, which every mind can understand, and regular constructions, into which any mind can enter; we attain justness and clearness, not life. Shakspeare lets justness and clearness look out for themselves, and attains life. From amidst his complex conception and his coloured semi-vision he grasps a fragment, a quivering fibre, and shows it; it is for you, from this fragment, to divine the rest. He, behind the word, has a whole picture, an attitude, a long argument abridged, a mass of swarming ideas; you know them, these abbreviative, condensive words: these are they which we launch out from the furnace of invention, in a fit of passion—words of slang or of fashion, which appeal to local memory or individual experience;[2] little concocted and incorrect phrases, which, by their irregularity, express the suddenness and the breaks of the inner sensation; trivial words, exaggerated figures.[3] There is a gesture beneath each, a quick contraction of the brows, a curl of laughing lips, a clown's trick, an unhinging of the whole machine. None of them mark ideas; each is the extremity and issue of a complete mimic action; none is the expression and definition of a partial and limited idea. This is why Shakspeare is strange and powerful, obscure and original, beyond all the poets of his or any other age; the most immoderate of all violators of language, the most marvellous of all creators of souls,

[1] This is why, in the eyes of a writer of the seventeenth century, Shakspeare's style is the most obscure, pretentious, painful, barbarous, and absurd, that could be imagined.

[2] Shakspeare's vocabulary is the most copious of all. It comprises about 15,000 words; Milton's only 8000.

[3] See the conversation of Laertes and his sister, and of Laertes and Polonius, in *Hamlet*. The style is foreign to the situation; and we see here plainly the natural and necessary process of Shakspeare's thought.

the farthest removed from regular logic and classical reason, the one most capable of exciting in us a world of forms, and of placing living beings before us.

III.

Let us reconstruct this world, so as to find in it the imprint of its creator. A poet does not copy at random the manners which surround him; he selects from this vast material, and involuntarily brings upon the stage the moods of the heart and the conduct which best suit his talent. If he is a logician, a moralist, an orator, as, for instance, one of the French great tragic poets (Racine) of the seventeenth century, he will only represent noble manners; he will avoid low characters; he will have a horror of valets and the plebs; he will observe the greatest decorum in respect of the strongest outbreaks of passion; he will reject as scandalous every low or indecent word; he will give us reason, loftiness, good taste throughout; he will suppress the familiarity, childishness, artlessness, gay banter of domestic life; he will blot out precise details, special traits, and will raise tragedy into a serene and sublime region, where his abstract personages, unencumbered by time and space, after an exchange of eloquent harangues and able dissertations, will kill each other becomingly, and as though they were merely concluding a ceremony. Shakspeare does just the contrary, because his genius is the exact opposite. His master faculty is an impassioned imagination, freed from the fetters of reason and morality. He abandons himself to it, and finds in man nothing that he would care to lop off. He accepts nature, and finds it beautiful in its entirety. He paints it in its littlenesses, its deformities, its weaknesses, its excesses, its irregularities, and in its rages; he exhibits man at his meals, in bed, at play, drunk, mad, sick; he adds that which passes behind the stage to that which passes on the stage. He does not dream of ennobling, but of copying human life, and aspires only to make his copy more energetic and more striking than the original.

Hence the morals of this drama; and first, the want of dignity. Dignity arises from self-command. A man selects the most noble of his acts and attitudes, and allows himself no other. Shakspeare's characters select none, but allow themselves all. His kings are men, and fathers of families. The terrible Leontes, who is about to order the death of his wife and his friend, plays like a child with his son: caresses him, gives him all the pretty little pet names which mothers are wont to employ; he dares be trivial; he gabbles like a nurse; he has her language, and fulfils her offices:

> 'Leontes. What, hast smutch'd thy nose?
> They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,
> We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain: . . .
> Come, sir page,
> Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!

Most dear'st! my collop . . . Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master. . . .
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman! . . . My brother,
Are you so fond of your young prince as we
Do seem to be of ours
Polixenes. If at home, sir,
He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter,
Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy,
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:
He makes a July's day short as December,
And with his varying childness cures in me
Thoughts that would thick my blood.' [1]

There are a score of such passages in Shakspeare. The great passions, with him as in nature, are preceded or followed by trivial actions, scraps of talk, commonplace sentiments. Strong emotions are accidents in our life: to drink, to eat, to talk of indifferent things, to carry out mechanically an habitual duty, to dream of some stale pleasure or some ordinary annoyance, that is the business of our lives. Shakspeare paints us as we are; his heroes bow, ask people for news, speak of rain and fine weather, as often and as casually as ourselves, on the very eve of falling into the extremity of misery, or of plunging into fatal resolutions. Hamlet asks what's o'clock, finds the wind biting talks of feasts and music heard without; and this quiet talk, so little in harmony with action, so full of slight, insignificant facts, which chance alone has raised up, lasts until the moment when his father's ghost, rising in the darkness, reveals the assassination which it is his duty to avenge.

Reason tells us that our manners should be measured; this is why the manners which Shakspeare paints are not so. Pure nature is violent, passionate; she admits no excuses, suffers no moderation, takes no count of circumstances, wills blindly, breaks out into railing, has the irrationality, ardour, anger of children. Shakspeare's characters have hot blood and a ready hand. They cannot restrain themselves, they abandon themselves at once to their grief, indignation, love, and plunge fatally down the steep slope, where their passion urges them How many need I quote? Timon, Leonato, Cressida, all the young girls, all the chief characters in the great dramas; everywhere Shakspeare paints the unreflecting impetuosity of immediate action. Capulet tells his daughter Juliet that in three days she is to marry Earl Paris, and bids her be proud of it; she answers that she is not proud of it, and yet she thanks the earl for this proof of love. Compare Capulet's fury with the

[1] *Winter's Tale*, i. 2.

anger of Orgor,[1] and you may measure the difference of the two poets and the two civilisations:

'*Capulet.* How now, how now, chop-logic! What is this?
"Proud," and "I thank you," and "I thank you not;"
And yet "not proud," mistress minion, you,
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,
To go with Paris to Saint Peter's church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
Out, you green-sickness carrion! out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!
Juliet. Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
Hear me with patience but to speak a word.
C. Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face:
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me;
My fingers itch. . . .
Lady C. You are too hot.
C. God's bread! it makes me mad:
Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,
Alone, in company, still my care hath been
To have her match'd: and having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly train'd,
Stuff'd, as they say, with honourable parts,
Proportion'd as one's thought would wish a man:
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
To answer, "I'll not wed; I cannot love,
I am too young; I pray you, pardon me,"—
But, an you will not wed, I'll pardon you:
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me:
Look to't, think on't, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise:
An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee.'[2]

This method of exhorting one's child to marry is peculiar to Shakspeare and the sixteenth century. Contradiction to these men was like a red rag to a bull: it drove them mad.

We might be sure that in this age, and on this stage, decency was a thing unknown. It is wearisome, being a check; men got rid of it, because it was wearisome. It is a gift of reason and morality; as indecency is produced by nature and passion. Shakspeare's words are too indecent to be translated. His characters call things by their dirty

[1] One of Molièr's characters in *Tartuffe*.—TR.

[2] *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 5.

names, and compel the thoughts to particular images of physical love. The talk of gentlemen and ladies is full of coarse allusions; we should have to find out an alehouse of the lowest description to hear the like words nowadays.[1]

It would be in an alehouse too that we should have to look for the rude jests and brutal kind of wit which form the staple of these conversations. Kindly politeness is the slow fruit of an advanced reflection; it is a sort of humanity and kindliness applied to small acts and every-day discourse; it bids man soften towards others, and forget himself in others; it constrains simple nature, which is selfish and gross. This is why it is absent from the manners of the drama we are considering. You will see carmen, out of sportiveness and good humour, deal one another hard blows: so it is pretty well with the conversation of the lords and ladies who are in a sportive mood; for instance, Beatrice and Benedick, very well bred folk as things go,[2] with a great name for wit and politeness, whose smart retorts create amusement for the bystanders. These 'skirmishes of wit' consist in telling one another plainly: You are a coward, a glutton, an idiot, a buffoon, a rake, a brute! You are a parrot's tongue, a fool, a . . . (the word is there). Benedick says:

> 'I will go . . . to the Antipodes . . . rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. . . . I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. . . .
> *Don Pedro.* You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.
> *Beatrice.* So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools.'[3]

We can infer the tone they use when in anger. Emilia, in *Othello*, says:

> 'He call'd her whore; a beggar in his drink
> Could not have laid such terms upon his callat.'[4]

They have a vocabulary of foul words as complete as that of Rabelais, and they drain it dry. They catch up handfuls of mud, and hurl it at their enemy, not conceiving themselves to be smirched.

Their actions correspond. They go without shame or pity to the limits of their passion. They kill, poison, violate, burn; the stage is full of abominations. Shakspeare lugs upon the stage all the atrocious deeds of the civil wars. These are the ways of wolves and hyænas. We must read of Jack Cade's sedition to gain an idea of this madness and fury. We might imagine we were seeing infuriated beasts, the murderous recklessness of a wolf in a sheepfold, the brutality of a hog fouling and rolling himself in filth and blood. They ruin, kill, butcher each other; with their feet in the blood of their victims, they call for food and

[1] *Henry VIII.* ii. 3, etc.

[2] *Much Ado about Nothing.* See also the manner in which Henry v. pays court to Katharine of France (v. 2).

[3] *Much Ado about Nothing,* ii. 1.

[4] Act iv. 2.

drink; they stick heads on pikes and make them kiss one another, and they laugh.

'*Jack Cade.* There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny. . . . There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score, and I will apparel them all in one livery. . . . And here, sitting upon London-stone, I charge and command that, of the city's cost, the pissing-conduit run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign. . . . Away, burn all the records of the realm: my mouth shall be the parliament of England. . . . And henceforth all things shall be in common. . . . What canst thou answer to my majesty for giving up of Normandy unto Mounsieur Basimecu, the dauphin of France? . . . The proudest peer in the realm shall not wear a head on his shoulders, unless he pay me tribute; there shall not a maid be married, but she shall pay to me her maidenhead ere they have it. (*Re-enter rebels with the heads of Lord Say and his son-in-law.*) But is not this braver? Let them kiss one another, for they loved well when they were alive.'[1]

Man must not be let loose; we know not what lusts and furies may brood under a sober guise. Nature was never so hideous, and this hideousness is the truth.

Are these cannibal moods only met with among the scum? Why, the princes are worse. The Duke of Cornwall orders the old Earl of Gloucester to be tied to a chair, because, owing to him, King Lear has escaped:

'Fellows, hold the chair.
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.
(*Gloucester is held down in the chair, while Cornwall plucks out one of his eyes, and sets his foot on it.*)
Gloster. He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!
Regan. One side will mock another; the other too.
Cornwall. If you see vengeance,—
Servant. Hold your hand, my lord:
I have served you ever since I was a child;
But better service have I never done you,
Than now to bid you hold. *Reg.* How now, you dog!
Serv. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?
Corn. My villain! (*Draws, and runs at him.*)
Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.
(*Draws; they fight; Cornwall is wounded.*)
Regan. Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!
(*Snatches a sword, comes behind, and stabs him.*)
Serv. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. O! (*Dies.*)
Corn. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?
Gloster. All dark and comfortless. Where's my son? . . .
Regan. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover.'[2]

[1] *Henry VI.* 2d part, iv. 2, 6, 7.

[2] *King Lear*, iii. 7.

Such are the manners of that stage. They are unbridled, like those of the age, and like the poet's imagination. To copy the common actions of every-day life, the puerilities and feeblenesses to which the greatest continually sink, the transports which degrade them, the indecent, harsh, or foul words, the atrocious deeds in which licence revels, the brutality and ferocity of primitive nature, is the work of a free and unencumbered imagination. To copy this hideousness and these excesses with a selection of such familiar, significant, precise details, that they reveal under every word of every personage the complete condition of civilisation, is the work of a concentrated and all-powerful imagination. This species of manners and this energy of description indicate the same faculty, unique and excessive, which the style had already indicated.

IV.

On this common background stands out a population of distinct living figures, illuminated by an intense light, in striking relief. This creative power is Shakspeare's great gift, and it communicates an extraordinary significance to his words. Every word pronounced by one of his characters enables us to see, besides the idea which it contains and the emotion which prompted it, the aggregate of the qualities and the entire character which produced it—the mood, physical attitude, bearing, look of the man, all instantaneously, with a clearness and force approached by no one. The words which strike our ears are not the thousandth part of those we hear within; they are like sparks thrown off at intervals; the eyes catch rare flashes of flame; the mind alone perceives the vast conflagration of which they are the signs and the effect. He gives us two dramas in one: the first strange, convulsive, curtailed, visible; the other consistent, immense, invisible: the one covers the other so well, that as a rule we do not realise that we are perusing words: we hear the roll of those terrible voices, we see contracted features, glowing eyes, pallid faces; we see the rages, the furious resolutions which mount to the brain with the feverish blood, and descend to the sharp-strung nerves. This property possessed by every phrase to exhibit a world of sentiments and forms, comes from the fact that the phrase is actually caused by a world of emotions and images. Shakspeare, when he wrote, felt all that we feel, and much besides. He had the prodigious faculty of seeing in a twinkling of the eye a complete character, body, mind, past and present, in every detail and every depth of his being, with the exact attitude and the expression of face, which the situation demanded. A word here and there of Hamlet or Othello would need for its explanation three pages of commentaries; each of the half-understood thoughts, which the commentator may have discovered, has left its trace in the turn of the phrase, in the nature of the metaphor, in the order of the words; nowadays, in pursuing these traces, we divine the thoughts. These innumerable

traces have been impressed in a second, within the compass of a line In the next line there are as many, impressed just as quickly, and in the same compass. You can gauge the concentration and the velocity of the imagination which creates thus.

These characters are all of the same family. Good or bad, gross or delicate, refined or awkward, Shakspeare gives them all the same kind of spirit which is his own. He has made of them imaginative people, void of will and reason, impassioned machines, vehemently hurled one upon another, who were the representation of whatever is most natural and most abandoned in human nature. Let us act the play to ourselves, and see in all its stages this clanship of figures, this prominence of portraits.

Lowest of all are the stupid folk, babbling or brutish. Imagination already exists there, where reason is not yet born; it exists also here, where reason is dead. The idiot and the brute blindly follow the phantoms which exist in their benumbed or mechanical brains. No poet has understood this mechanism like Shakspeare. His Caliban, for instance, a deformed savage, fed on roots, growls like a beast under the hand of Prospero, who has subdued him. He howls continually against his master, though he knows that every curse will be paid back with 'cramps and aches.' He is a chained wolf, trembling and fierce, who tries to bite when approached, and who crouches when he sees the lash raised above him. He has a foul sensuality, a loud base laugh, the gluttony of degraded humanity. He wished to violate Miranda in her sleep. He cries for his food, and gorges himself when he gets it. A sailor who had landed in the island, Stephano, gives him wine; he kisses his feet, and takes him for a god; he asks if he has not dropped from heaven, and adores him. We find in him rebellious and baffled passions, which are eager to be avenged and satiated. Stephano had beaten his comrade. Caliban cries, 'Beat him enough: after a little time I'll beat him too.' He prays Stephano to come with him and murder Prospero in his sleep; he thirsts to lead him there, and sees his master already with his throat cut, and his brains scattered on the earth:

> 'Prithee, my king, be quiet. See'st thou here,
> This is the mouth o' the cell: no noise, and enter.
> Do that good mischief which may make this island
> Thine own for ever, and I, thy Caliban,
> For aye thy foot-licker.' [1]

Others, like Ajax and Cloten, are more like men, and yet it is pure mood that Shakspeare depicts in them, as in Caliban. The clogging corporeal machine, the mass of muscles, the thick blood coursing in the veins of these fighting brutes, oppress the intelligence, and leave no life but for animal passions. Ajax uses his fists, and devours meat; that is

[1] *The Tempest*, iv. 1.

his existence; if he is jealous of Achilles, it is pretty much as a bull is jealous of his fellow. He permits himself to be restrained and led by Ulysses, without looking before him: the grossest flattery decoys him. The Greeks have urged him to accept Hector's challenge. Behold him puffed up with pride, scorning to answer any one, not knowing what he says or does. Thersites cries, 'Good-morrow, Ajax;' and he replies, 'Thanks, Agamemnon.' He has no further thought than to contemplate his enormous frame, and roll majestically his great stupid eyes. When the day comes, he strikes at Hector as on an anvil. After a good while they are separated. 'I am not warm yet,' says Ajax, 'let us fight again.'[1] Cloten is less massive than this phlegmatic ox; but he is just as idiotic, just as vainglorious, just as coarse. The beautiful Imogen, urged by his insults and his scullion manners, tells him that his whole body is not worth as much as Posthumus' garment. He is stung to the quick, repeats the word ten times; he cannot shake off the idea, and runs at it again and again with his head down, like an angry ram:

'*Cloten.* "His garment?" Now, the devil— *Imogen.* To Dorothy my woman hie thee presently— *C.* "His garment?" . . . You have abused me: "His meanest garment!" . . . I'll be revenged: "His meanest garment!" Well.'[2]

He gets some of Posthumus' garments, and goes to Milford Haven, expecting to meet Imogen there. On his way he mutters thus:

'With that suit upon my back, will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valour, which will then be a torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust has dined,—which, as I say, to vex her I will execute in the clothes that she so praised,—to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again.'[3]

Others, again, are but babblers: for example, Polonius, the grave brainless counsellor; a great baby, not yet out of his 'swathing clouts;' a solemn booby, who rains on men a shower of counsels, compliments, and maxims; a sort of court speaking-trumpet, useful in grand ceremonies, with the air of a thinker, but fit only to spout words. But the most complete of all these characters is that of the nurse in Romeo and Juliet, a gossip, loose in her talk, a regular kitchen-oracle, smelling of the stew-pan and old boots, foolish, impudent, immoral, but otherwise a good creature, and affectionate to her child. Mark this disjointed and never-ending gossip's babble:

'*Nurse.* 'Faith I can tell her age unto an hour
Lady Capulet. She's not fourteen. . . .
Nurse. Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls!—
Were of an age: well, Susan is with God;

[1] See *Troïlus and Cressida*, ii. 3 the jesting manner in which the generals trive on this fierce brute.

[2] *Cymbeline*, ii. 3. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 5.

She was too good for me: but, as I said,
On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen;
That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years;
And she was wean'd,—I never shall forget it,—
Of all the days of the year, upon that day:
For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
Sitting in the sun under the dove-house wall:
My lord and you were then at Mantua:—
Nay, I do bear a brain:—but, as I said
When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
Of my dug and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
To see it tetchy and fall out with the dug!
Shake, quoth the dove-house: 'twas no need, I trow,
To bid me trudge:
And since that time it is eleven years;
For then she could stand alone; nay, by the rood,
She could have run and waddled all about;
For even the day before, she broke her brow.'[1]

Then she tells an indecent anecdote, which she begins over again four times. She is silenced: what then? She has her anecdote in her head, and cannot cease repeating it and laughing to herself. Endless repetitions are the mind's first step. The vulgar do not pursue the straight line of reasoning and of the story; they repeat their steps, as it were merely marking time: struck with an image, they keep it for an hour before their eyes, and are never tired of it. If they do advance, they turn aside to a hundred chance ideas before they get at the phrase required. They let themselves be diverted by all the thoughts which come across them. This is what the nurse does; and when she brings Juliet news of her lover, she torments and wearies her, less from a wish to tease than from a habit of wandering from the point:

'*Nurse.* Jesu, what haste? can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?
Juliet. How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath? . . .
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied: is't good or bad?
N. Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man
Romeo! no, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare: he is not the flower of courtesy, but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb. Go thy ways, wench; serve God. What, have you dined at home?
J. No, no: but all this did I know before.
What says he of our marriage? what of that?

[1] *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 3.

N. Lord, how my head aches! what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.
My back o' t'other side,—O, my back, my back!
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,
To catch my death with jaunting up and down!
J. I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?
N. Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous,—Where is your mother?'[1]

It is never-ending. Her gabble is worse when she comes to announce to Juliet the death of her cousin and the banishment of Romeo. It is the shrill cry and chatter of an overgrown asthmatic magpie. She laments, confuses the names, spins roundabout sentences, ends by asking for *aqua-vitæ*. She curses Romeo, them brings him to Juliet's chamber. Next day Juliet is ordered to marry Earl Paris; Juliet throws herself into her nurse's arms, praying for comfort, advice, assistance. The other finds the true remedy: Marry Paris,

'O, he's a lovely gentleman!
Romeo's a dishclout to him: an eagle, madam,
Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye
As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart,
I think you are happy in this second match,
For it excels your first.'[2]

This cool immorality, these weather-cock arguments, this fashion of estimating love like a fishwoman, completes the portrait.

V.

The mechanical imagination produces Shakspeare's fool-characters: a quick venturesome dazzling, unquiet imagination, produces his men of wit. Of wit there are many kinds. One, altogether French, which is but reason, a foe to paradox, scorner of folly, a sort of incisive common sense, having no occupation but to render truth amusing and evident, the most effective weapon with an intelligent and vain people: such was the wit of Voltaire and the drawing-rooms. The other, that of improvisators and artists, is a mere inventive transport, paradoxical, unshackled, exuberant, a sort of self-entertainment, a phantasmagoria of images, quibbles, strange ideas, dazing and intoxicating, like the movement and illumination of a ball. Such is the wit of Mercutio, of the clowns, of Beatrice, Rosalind, and Benedick. They laugh, not from a sense of the ridiculous, but from the desire to laugh. You must look elsewhere for the campaigns which aggressive reason makes against human folly. Here folly is in its full bloom. Our folk think of amusement, and nothing more. They are good-humoured; they let their wit ride gaily over the possible and the impossible. They play

[1] *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 5. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 5

upon words, contort their sense, draw absurd and laughable inferences, exchange them alternately, like shuttlecocks, one after another, and vie with each other in singularity and invention. They dress all their ideas in strange or sparkling metaphors. The taste of the time was for masquerades; their conversation is a masquerade of ideas. They say nothing in a simple style; they only seek to heap together subtle things, far-fetched, difficult to invent and to understand; all their expressions are over-refined, unexpected, extraordinary; they strain their thought, and change it into a caricature. 'Alas, poor Romeo!' says Mercutio, 'he is already dead; stabbed with a white wench's black eye; shot through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft.'[1] Benedick relates a conversation he has just held with his mistress: 'O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! an oak, but with one green leaf on it would have answered her; my very visor began to assume life, and scold with her.'[2] These gay and perpetual extravagances show the bearing of the interlocutors. They do not remain quietly seated in their chairs, like the Marquis in the *Misanthrope;* they wheel about, leap, paint their faces, gesticulate boldly their ideas; their wit-rockets end with a song. Young folk, soldiers and artists, they let off their fireworks of phrases, and gambol round about. 'There was a star danced, and under that was I born.'[3] This expression of Beatrice's aptly describes the kind of poetical, sparkling, unreasoning, charming wit, more akin to music than to literature, a sort of outspoken and wide-awake dream, not unlike that described by Mercutio:

> 'O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
> She is the fairies' midwife; and she comes
> In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
> On the fore-finger of an alderman,
> Drawn with a team of little atomies
> Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
> Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
> The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
> The traces of the smallest spider's web,
> The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
> Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
> Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat,
> Not half so big as a round little worm
> Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
> Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
> Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
> Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
> And in this state she gallops night by night
> Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
> O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight,
> O'er lawyers fingers, who straight dream on fees,

[1] *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 4. [2] *Much Ado about Nothing*, ii. 1. [3] *Ibid.*

O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream. . . .
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice:
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five-fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled much misfortune bodes. . . .
This is she'[1] . . .

Romeo interrupts him, or he would never end. Let the reader compare with the dialogue of the French theatre this little poem,

'Child of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,'[2]

introduced without incongruity into a conversation of the sixteenth century, and he will comprehend the difference between the wit which devotes itself to reasoning, or to record a subject for laughter, and that imagination which is self-amused with its own act.

Falstaff has the passions of an animal, and the imagination of a man of wit. There is no character which better exemplifies the dash and immorality of Shakspeare. Falstaff is a great supporter of disreputable places, swearer, gamester, brawler, wine-bag, as low as he well can be. He has a big belly, bloodshot eyes, bloated face, shaking leg; he spends his life huddled up among the tavern-jugs, or asleep on the ground behind the arras; he only wakes to curse, lie, brag, and steal. He is as big a swindler as Panurge, who had sixty-three ways of making money, 'of which the honestest was by sly theft.' And what is worse, he is an old man, a knight, a courtier, and well bred. Must he not be odious and repulsive? By no means; you cannot help liking him. At bottom, like his brother Panurge, he is 'the best fellow in the world.' He has no malice in his composition; no other wish than to laugh and be amused. When insulted, he bawls out louder than his attackers, and pays them back with interest in coarse words and insults; but he owes them no grudge for it. The next minute he is sitting down with them in a tavern, drinking their health like a brother and comrade. If he has vices, he exposes them so frankly that we are obliged to forgive him them. He seems to say to us: 'Well, so I am, what then? I like drinking: isn't the wine

[1] *Romeo and Juliet* i. 4 [2] *Ibid.*

good? I take to my heels when hard hitting begins: isn't fighting a nuisance? I get into debt, and do fools out of their money: isn't it nice to have money in your pocket? I brag: isn't it natural to want to be well thought of?'—'Dost thou hear, Hal? thou knowest, in the state of innocency, Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villany? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty.'[1] Falstaff is so frankly immoral, that he ceases to be so. Conscience ends at a certain point; nature assumes its place, and the man rushes upon what he desires, without more thought of being just or unjust than an animal in the neighbouring wood. Falstaff, engaged in recruiting, has sold exemptions to all the rich people, and only enrolled starved and half-naked wretches. There's but a shirt and a half in all his company: that does not trouble him. Bah! 'they'll find linen enough on every hedge.' The prince, who has seen them pass muster, says, 'I did never see such pitiful rascals.' 'Tut, tut,' answers Falstaff, 'good enough to toss; food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better; tush, man, mortal men, mortal men.'[2] His second excuse is his unfailing spirit. If ever there was a man who could talk, it is he. Insults and oaths, curses, jobations, protests, flow from him as from an open barrel. He is never at a loss; he devises a shift for every difficulty. Lies sprout out of him, fructify, increase, beget one another, like mushrooms on a rich and rotten bed of earth. He lies still more from his imagination and nature than from interest and necessity. It is evident from the manner in which he strains his fictions. He says he has fought alone against two men. The next moment it is four. Presently we have seven, then eleven, then fourteen. He is stopped in time, or he would soon be talking of a whole army. When unmasked, he does not lose his temper, and is the first to laugh at his boastings. 'Gallants, lads, boys, hearts of gold. . . . What, shall we be merry? shall we have a play extempore?'[3] He does the scolding part of King Henry with so much truth, that one might take him for a king, or an actor. This big pot-bellied fellow, a coward, a jester, a brawler, a drunkard, a lewd rascal, a pothouse poet, is one of Shakspeare's favourites. The reason is, that his manners are those of pure nature, and Shakspeare's mind is congenial with his own.

VI.

Nature is shameless and gross amidst this mass of flesh, heavy with wine and fatness. It is delicate in the delicate body of women, but as unreasoning and impassioned in Desdemona as in Falstaff. Shakspeare's women are charming children, who feel in excess and love with folly. They have unconstrained manners, little rages, pretty words of friendship, coquettish rebelliousness, a graceful volubility, which

[1] First Part of *King Henry IV*, iii. 3. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 2. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 4

recall the warbling and the prettiness of birds. The heroines of the French stage are almost men; these are women, and in every sense of the word. More imprudent than Desdemona a woman could not be. She is moved with pity for Cassio, and asks a favour for him passionately, recklessly, be the thing just or no, dangerous or no. She knows nothing of man's laws, and thinks nothing of them. All that she sees is, that Cassio is unhappy:

'Be thou assured, good Cassio . . . My lord shall never rest;
I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I'll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio's suit.'[1]

She asks her favour:

'*Othello.* Not now, sweet Desdemona; some other time.
Des. But shall 't be shortly? *O.* The sooner, sweet, for you.
Des. Shall 't be to-night at supper? *O.* No, not to-night.
Des. To-morrow dinner, then? *O.* I shall not dine at home;
I meet the captains at the citadel.
Des. Why, then, to-morrow night; or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn:
I prithee, name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days: in faith, he's penitent.'[2]

She is somewhat astonished to see herself refused; she scolds him. Othello yields: who would not yield, seeing the reproach in those lovely sulking eyes? O, says she, with a pretty pout:

'This is not a boon;
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person.'[3]

A moment after, when he prays her to leave him alone for a while, mark the innocent gaiety, the ready observance, the playful child's tone:

'Shall I deny you? no: farewell, my lord. . . .
Emilia, come: Be as your fancies teach you;
Whate'er you be, I am obedient.'[4]

This vivacity, this petulance, does not prevent shrinking modesty and silent timidity: on the contrary, they spring from a common cause, extreme sensibility. She, who feels much and deeply, has more reserve and more passion than others; she breaks out or is silent; she says nothing or everything. Such is this Imogen,

'So tender of rebukes that words are strokes,
And strokes death to her.'[5]

[1] *Othello*, iii. 3. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid* [5] *Cymbeline*, iii. 5.

Such is Virgilia, the sweet wife of Coriolanus: her heart is not a Roman one; she is terrified at her husband's victories: when Volumnia describes him stamping on the field of battle, and wiping his bloody brow with his hand, she grows pale:

> 'His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood! . . .
> Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!'[1]

She would forget all that she knows of these dangers; she dare not think of them. When asked if Coriolanus does not generally return wounded, she cries, 'O, no, no, no.' She shuns this cruel idea, and nurses a secret anguish at the bottom of her heart. She will not leave the house: 'I'll not over the threshold till my lord return.'[2] She does not smile, will hardly admit a visitor; she would blame herself, as for a lack of tenderness, for a moment's forgetfulness or gaiety. When he does return, she can only blush and weep. This exalted sensibility must needs end in love. They all love without measure, and nearly all at first sight. At the first look Juliet casts on Romeo, she says to the nurse:

> 'Go, ask his name: if he be married,
> My grave is like to be my wedding bed.'[3]

It is the revelation of their destiny. As Shakspeare has made them, they cannot but love, and they must love till death. But this first look is an ecstasy; and this sudden approach of love is a transport. Miranda seeing Fernando, fancies that she sees 'a thing divine.' She halts motionless, in the amazement of this sudden vision, at the sound of these heavenly harmonies which rise from the depths of her heart. She weeps, on seeing him drag the heavy logs; with her tender white hands she would do the work whilst he reposed. Her compassion and tenderness carry her away; she is no longer mistress of her words, she says what she would not, what her father has forbidden her to disclose, what an instant before she would never have confessed. The too full heart overflows unwittingly, happy, and ashamed at the current of joy and new sensations with which an unknown feeling has flooded her

> '*Miranda.* I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of. . . .
> *Fernando.* Wherefore weep you?
> *M.* At mine unworthiness that dare not offer
> What I desire to give, and much less take
> What I shall die to want. . . .
> I am your wife, if you will marry me;
> If not, I'll die your maid.'[4]

This irresistible invasion of love transforms the whole character. The shrinking and tender Desdemona, suddenly, in full senate, before her father, renounces her father; dreams not for an instant of asking his pardon, or consoling him. She will leave for Cyprus with Othello,

[1] *Coriolanus*, i. 3. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 5. [4] *The Tempest*, iii. 1.

through the enemy's fleet and the tempest. Everything vanishes before the one and adored image which has taken entire and absolute possession of her full heart. So, extreme evils, bloody resolves, are only the natural sequence of such love. Ophelia becomes mad, Juliet commits suicide; no one but looks upon such madness and death as necessary. You will not then discover virtue in these souls, for by virtue is implied a determinate desire to do good, and a rational observance of duty. They are only pure through delicacy or love. They recoil from vice as a gross thing, not as an immoral thing. What they feel is not respect for the marriage vow, but adoration of their husband. 'O sweetest, fairest lily!' So Cymbeline speaks of one of these frail and lovely flowers which cannot be torn from the tree to which they have grown, whose least impurity would tarnish their whiteness. When Imogen learns that her husband means to kill her as being faithless, she does not revolt at the outrage; she has no pride, but only love. 'False to his bed!' She faints at the thought that she is no longer loved. When Cordelia hears her father, an irritable old man, already half insane, ask her how she loves him, she cannot make up her mind to say aloud the flattering protestations which her sisters have been lavishing. She is ashamed to display her tenderness before the world, and to buy a dowry by it. He disinherits her, and drives her away; she holds her tongue. And when she afterwards finds him abandoned and mad, she goes on her knees before him, with such a touching emotion, she weeps over that dear insulted head with so gentle a pity, that you might fancy it was the tender accent of a desolate but delighted mother, kissing the pale lips of her child:

> 'O you kind gods,
> Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
> The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
> Of this child-changed father! . . .
> O my dear father! Restoration hang
> Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
> Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
> Have in thy reverence made! . . . Was this a face
> To be opposed against the warring winds?
> . . . Mine enemy's dog,
> Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
> Against my fire. . . .
> How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?'

If, in fact, Shakspeare comes across a heroic character, worthy of Corneille, a Roman, such as the mother of Coriolanus, he will explain by passion, what Corneille would have explained by heroism. He will depict it violent and eager with the violent feelings of glory. She will not be able to refrain herself. She will break out into accents of triumph when she sees her son crowned; into imprecations of vengeance

[1] *King Lear*. iv. 7.

when she sees him banished. She will descend to the vulgarities of pride and anger; she will abandon herself to mad effusions of joy, to dreams of an ambitious fancy,[1] and will prove once more that the impassioned imagination of Shakspeare has left its trace in all the creatures whom he has made.

VII.

Nothing is easier to such a poet than to create perfect villains. Throughout he is handling the unruly passions which make their character, and he never hits upon the moral law which restrains them; but at the same time, and by the same faculty, he changes the inanimate masks, which the conventions of the stage mould on an identical pattern, into living and illusory figures. How shall a demon be made to look as real as a man? Iago is a soldier of fortune who has roved the world from Syria to England, who, nursed in the lowest ranks, having had close acquaintance with the horrors of the wars of the sixteenth century, had drawn thence the maxims of a Turk and the philosophy of a butcher; principles he has none left. 'O my reputation, my reputation!' cries the dishonoured Cassio. 'As I am an honest man,' says Iago, 'I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation.'[2] As for woman's virtue, he looks upon it like a man who has kept company with slave-dealers. He estimates Desdemona's love as he would estimate a mare's: that sort of thing lasts so long—then . . . And then he airs an experimental theory, with precise details and nasty expressions, like a stud doctor. 'It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor, nor he his to her. . . . These Moors are changeable in their wills; . . . the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as colonquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice.'[3] Desdemona, on the shore, trying to forget her care, begs him to sing the praises of her sex. For every portrait he finds the most insulting insinuations. She insists, and bids him take the case of a really perfect woman. He replies: 'She was a wight, if ever such

[1] 'O ye're well met: the hoarded plague o' the gods
Requite your love!
If that I could for weeping, you should hear—
Nay, and you shall hear some. . . .
I'll tell thee what; yet go:
Nay, but thou shalt stay too: I would my son
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,
His good sword in his hand.'—*Coriolanus*, iv. 2.

See again, *Coriolanus*, i. 3, the frank and abandoned triumph of a woman of the people: 'I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.'

[2] *Othello*, ii. 3. [3] *Ibid.* i. 3.

wight were, . . . to suckle fools and chronicle small beer.'[1] He also says: 'O gentle lady, do not put me to't; for I am nothing, if not critical.'[2] This is the key to his character. He despises man; to him Desdemona is a little wanton wench, Cassio an elegant word-shaper, Othello a mad bull, Roderigo an ass to be basted, thumped, made to go. He diverts himself by setting these passions at issue; he laughs at it as at a play. When Othello, swooning, shakes in his convulsions, he rejoices at this capital result: 'Work on, my medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught.'[3] You would take him for one of the poisoners of the time, studying the effect of a new potion on a dying dog. He only speaks in sarcasms; he has them ready for every one, even for those whom he does not know. When he wakes Brabantio to inform him of the elopement of his daughter, he tells him the matter in coarse terms, sharpening the sting of the bitter pleasantry, like a conscientious executioner, rubbing his hands when he hears the culprit groan under the knife. 'Thou art a villain!' cries Brabantio. 'You are —a senator!' answers Iago. But the feature which really completes him, and makes him rank with Mephistopheles, is the atrocious truth and the cogent reasoning by which he likens his crime to virtue.[4] Cassio, under his advice, goes to see Desdemona, to obtain her intercession for him; this visit is to be the ruin of Desdemona and Cassio Iago, left alone, hums for an instant quietly, then cries:

> 'And what's he then that says I play the villain?
> When this advice is free I give and honest,
> Probal to thinking and indeed the course
> To win the Moor again.'[5]

To all these features must be added a diabolical energy,[6] an inexhaustible inventiveness in images, caricatures, obscenity, the manners of a guard-room, the brutal bearing and tastes of a trooper, habits of dissimulation, coolness and hatred, patience, contracted amid the perils and devices of a military life, and the continuous miseries of long degradation and frustrated hope; you will understand how Shakspeare could transform abstract treachery into a concrete form, and how Iago's atrocious vengeance is only the natural consequence of his character, life, and training.

VIII.

How much more visible is this impassioned and unfettered genius of Shakspeare in the great characters which sustain the whole weight of the drama! The startling imagination, the furious velocity of the manifold and exuberant ideas, the unruly passion, rushing upon death

[1] *Othello*, ii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* iv. 1.

[4] See the like cynicism and scepticism in Richard III. Both begin by slandering human nature, and both are misanthropical of *malice prepense*.

[5] *Othello*, ii. 3.

[6] See his conversation with Brabantio, then with Roderigo, Act i.

and crime, hallucinations, madness, all the ravages of delirium bursting through will and reason: such are the forces and ravings which engender them. Shall I speak of dazzling Cleopatra, who holds Antony in the whirlwind of her devices and caprices, who fascinates and kills, who scatters to the winds the lives of men as a handful of desert-dust, the fatal Eastern sorceress who sports with life and death, headstrong, irresistible, child of air and fire, whose life is but a tempest, whose thought, ever repointed and broken, is like the crackling of a lightning flash? Of Othello, who, beset by the concise picture of physical adultery, cries at every word of Iago like a man on the rack; who, his nerves hardened by twenty years of war and shipwreck, grows mad and swoons for grief, and whose soul, poisoned by jealousy, is distracted and disorganised in convulsions and in stupor? Or of old King Lear, violent and weak, whose half-unseated reason is gradually toppled over under the shocks of incredible treacheries, who presents the frightful spectacle of madness, first increasing, then complete, of curses, howlings, superhuman sorrows, into which the transport of the first access of fury carries him, and then of peaceful incoherence, chattering imbecility, into which the shattered man subsides: a marvellous creation, the supreme effort of pure imagination, a disease of reason which reason could never have conceived?[1] Amid so many portraitures let us choose two or three to indicate the depth and nature of them all. The critic is lost in Shakspeare, as in an immense town; he will describe a couple of monuments, and entreat the reader to imagine the city.

Plutarch's Coriolanus is an austere, coldly haughty patrician, a general of the army. In Shakspeare's hands he becomes a coarse soldier, a man of the people as to his language and manners, an athlete of war, with a voice like a trumpet; whose eyes by contradiction are filled with a rush of blood and anger, proud and terrible in mood, a lion's soul in the body of a steer. The philosopher Plutarch told of him a lofty philosophic action, saying that he had been at pains to save his landlord in the sack of Corioli. Shakspeare's Coriolanus has indeed the same disposition, for he is really a good fellow; but when Lartius asks him the name of this poor Volscian, in order to secure his liberty, he yawns out:

> 'By Jupiter! forgot.
> I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.
> Have we no wine here?'[2]

He is hot, he has been fighting, he must drink; he leaves his Volscian in chains, and thinks no more of him. He fights like a porter, with shouts and insults, and the cries from that deep chest are

[1] See, again, in Timon, and Hotspur more particularly, a perfect example of a vehement and unreasoning imagination.

[2] *Coriolanus*, i. 9.

heard above the din of the battle like the sounds from a brazen trumpet. He has scaled the walls of Corioli, he has butchered till he is gorged with slaughter. Instantly he turns to the other army, and arrives red with blood, 'as he were flay'd.' 'Come I too late?' Cominius begins to compliment him. 'Come I too late?' he repeats. The battle is not yet finished: he embraces Cominius:

> 'O! let me clip ye
> In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart
> As merry as when our nuptial day was done.'[1]

For the battle is a real holiday to him. Such senses, such a frame, need the outcry, the din of battle, the excitement of death and wounds. This haughty and indomitable heart needs the joy of victory and destruction. Mark the display of his patrician arrogance and his soldier's bearing, when he is offered the tenth of the spoils:

> 'I thank you, general;
> But cannot make my heart consent to take
> A bribe to pay my sword.'[2]

The soldiers cry, Marcius! Marcius! and the trumpets sound. He gets into a passion; rates the brawlers:

> 'No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
> My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch,—
> . . . You shout me forth
> In acclamations hyperbolical;
> As if I loved my little should be dieted
> In praises sauced with lies.'[3]

They are reduced to loading him with honours: Cominius gives him a war-horse; decrees him the cognomen of Coriolanus: the people shout Caius Marcius Coriolanus! He replies:

> 'I will go wash;
> And when my face is fair, you shall perceive
> Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you.
> I mean to stride your steed.'[4]

This loud voice, loud laughter, blunt acknowledgment of a man who can act and shout better than speak, foretell the mode in which he will treat the plebeians. He loads them with insults; he cannot find abuse enough for the cobblers, tailors, greedy cowards, down on their knees for a copper. 'To beg of Hob and Dick!' 'Bid them wash their faces and keep their teeth clean.' But he must do this, if he would be consul; his friends constrain him. It is then that the passionate soul, incapable of self-restraint, such as Shakspeare knew how to paint, breaks forth without let. He is there in his candidate's gown, gnashing his teeth, and getting up his lesson in this style:

[1] *Coriolanus*, i. 6. [2] *Ibid.* i. 9. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

'What must I say?
"I pray, sir"—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace:—"Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of you brethren roar'd and ran
From the noise of our own drums."'[1]

The tribunes have no difficulty in stopping the election of a candidate who begs in this fashion. They taunt him in full senate, reproach him with his speech about the corn. He repeats it, with aggravations. Once roused, neither danger nor prayer restrains him:

'His heart's his mouth:
And, being angry, 'does forget that ever
He heard the name of death.'[2]

He rails against the people, the tribunes, street-magistrates, flatterers of the plebs. 'Come, enough,' says his friend Menenius. 'Enough, with over-measure,' says Brutus the tribune. He retorts:

'No, take more:
What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! . . . At once pluck out
The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
The sweet which is their poison.'[3]

The tribune cries, Treason! and bids seize him. He cries:

'Hence, old goat! . . .
Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones
Out of thy garments!'[4]

He strikes him, drives the mob off: he fancies himself amongst Volscians. 'On fair ground I could beat forty of them!' And when his friends hurry him off, he threatens still, and

'Speak(s) o' the people,
As if you (he) were a god to punish, not a man
Of their infirmity.'[5]

Yet he bends before his mother, for he has recognised in her a soul as lofty and a courage as intractable as his own. He has submitted from his infancy to the ascendency of this pride which he admires. Volumnia reminds him: 'My praises made thee first a soldier.' Without power over himself, continually tost on the fire of his too hot blood, he has always been the arm, she the thought. He obeys from involuntary respect, like a soldier before his general, but with what effort!

'*Coriolanus.* The smiles of knaves
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
The glances of my sight! a beggar's tongue
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,

[1] *Coriolanus*, ii. 3. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 1. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.*

Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
That hath received an alms!—I will not do't. . . .
Volumnia. . . . Do as thou list.
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself. *Cor.* Pray, be content:
Mother, I am going to the market-place;
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,
Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved
Of all the trades in Rome.'[1]

He goes, and his friends speak for him. Except a few bitter asides, he appears to be submissive. Then the tribunes pronounce the accusation, and summon him to answer as a traitor:

'*Cor.* How! traitor! *Men.* Nay, temperately: your promise.
Cor. The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!
Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say,
"Thou liest," unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray the gods.'[2]

His friends surround him, entreat him: he will not listen; he foams, he is like a wounded lion:

'Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word.'[3]

The people vote exile, supporting by their shouts the sentence of the tribune:

'*Cor.* You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose love I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you. . . . Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere.'[4]

Judge of his hatred by these raging words. It goes on increasing by the expectation of vengeance. We find him next with the Volscian army before Rome. His friends kneel before him, he lets them kneel. Old Menenius, who had loved him as a son, only comes now to be driven away. 'Wife, mother, child, I know not.'[5] It is himself he knows not. For this power of hating in a noble heart is equal with the power of loving. He has transports of tenderness as of hating, and can contain himself no more in joy than in grief. He runs, spite of his resolution, to his wife's arms; he bends his knee before his mother.

[1] *Coriolanus*, iii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 3. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.* v 2.

He had summoned the Volscian chiefs to make them witnesses of his refusals; and before them, he grants all, and weeps. On his return to Corioli, an insulting word from Aufidius maddens him, and drives him upon the daggers of the Volscians. Vices and virtues, glory and misery, greatness and feebleness, the unbridled passion which composes his nature, endowed him with all.

If the life of Coriolanus is the history of a mood, that of Macbeth is the history of a monomania. The witches' prophecy was buried in his heart, instantaneously, like a fixed idea. Gradually this idea corrupts the rest, and transforms the man. He is haunted; he forgets the thanes who surround him and 'who stay upon his leisure;' he already sees in the future an indistinct chaos of images of blood:

> . . . 'Why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs? . . .
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.'[1]

This is the language of hallucination. Macbeth's hallucination becomes complete when his wife has resolved on the assassination of the king. He sees in the air a blood-stained dagger, 'in form as palpable, as this which now I draw.' His whole brain is filled with grand and terrible phantoms, which the mind of a common murderer would never have conceived; the poetry of which indicates a generous heart, enslaved to an idea of fate, and capable of remorse:

> . . . 'Now o'er the one half world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
> Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. . . . (*A bell rings.*)
> I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell.'[2]

He has done the deed, and returns tottering, haggard, like a drunken man. He is horrified at his bloody hands, 'these hangman's hands.' Nothing now can cleanse them. The whole ocean might sweep over them, but they would keep the hue of murder. 'What hands are here? ha, they pluck out mine eyes!' He is disturbed by a word which the sleeping chamberlains uttered:

> 'One cried, "God bless us!" and "Amen," the other;
> As they had seen me with these hangman's hands

[1] *Macbeth*, i. 3. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 1.

Listening their fear, I could not say "Amen,"
When they did say, "God bless us!"
. . . But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen?"
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat.'[1]

Then comes a strange dream; a frightful vision of punishment descends upon him.

Above the beating of his heart, the tingling of the blood which boils in his brain, he had heard them cry:

'"Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep," the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.'[2]

And the voice, like an angel's trumpet, calls him by all his titles:

'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more!'[3]

This mad idea, incessantly repeated, beats in his brain, with monotonous and hard-pressing strokes, like the tongue of a bell. Insanity begins; all the force of his mind is occupied by keeping before him, in spite of himself, the image of the man whom he has murdered in his sleep:

'To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. (*Knock.*)
Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!'[4]

Thenceforth, in the rare intervals in which the fever of his mind is assuaged, he is like a man worn out by a long malady. It is the sad prostration of maniacs worn out by their fits of rage:

'Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.'[5]

When rest has restored some force to the human machine, the fixed idea shakes him again, and drives him onward, like a pitiless horseman, who has left his panting horse only for a moment, to leap again into the saddle, and spur him over precipices. The more he has done, the more he must do:

'I am in blood
Steep'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.'[6] . . .

He kills in order to preserve the fruit of his murders. The fatal circlet of gold attracts him like a magic jewel; and he beats down, from a

[1] *Macbeth*, ii. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 3.
[6] *Ibid.* iii. 4.

sort of blind instinct, the heads which he sees between the crown and him

> 'But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
> Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
> Can touch him further.'[1]

Macbeth has Banquo murdered, and in the midst of a great feast he is informed of the success of his plan. He smiles, and proposes Banquo's health. Suddenly, conscience-smitten, he sees the ghost of the murdered man; for this phantom, which Shakspeare summons, is not a mere stage-trick: we feel that here the supernatural is unnecessary, and that Macbeth would create it, even if hell would not send it. With stiffened muscles, dilated eyes, his mouth half open with deadly terror, he sees it shake its bloody head, and cries with that hoarse voice which is only to be heard in maniacs' cells:

> 'Prithee, see there! Behold! look! lo! how say you?
> Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.
> If charnel-houses and our graves must send
> Those that we bury, back our monuments
> Shall be the maws of kites. . . .
> Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time, . . .
> Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
> Too terrible for the ear: the times have been
> That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end; but now they rise again,
> With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
> And push us from our stools: . . .
> Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
> Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
> Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
> Which thou dost glare with!'[2]

His body trembling like that of an epileptic, his teeth clenched, foaming at the mouth, he sinks on the ground, his limbs beat against the floor, shaken with convulsive quiverings, whilst a dull sob swells his panting breast, and dies in his swollen throat. What joy can remain for a man besieged by such visions? The wide dark country, which he surveys from his towering castle, is but a field of death, haunted by deadly apparitions; Scotland, which he is depopulating, a cemetery,

[1] *Macbeth*, iii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 4.

'Where . . . the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.'[1]

His soul is 'full of scorpions.' He has 'supp'd full with horrors,' and the faint odour of blood has disgusted him with all else. He goes stumbling over the corpses which he has heaped up, with the mechanical and desperate smile of a maniac-murderer. Thenceforth death, life, all is one to him; the habit of murder has placed him beyond humanity. They tell him that his wife is dead:

'*Macb.* She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.'[2]

There remains for him the hardening of the heart in crime, the fixed belief in destiny. Hunted down by his enemies, 'bear-like, tied to a stake,' he fights, troubled only by the prediction of the witches, sure of being invulnerable so long as the man whom they have pointed at, does not appear. His thoughts inhabit a supernatural world, and to the last he walks with his eyes fixed on the dream, which has possessed him from the first.

The history of Hamlet, like that of Macbeth, is the story of a moral poisoning. Hamlet's is a delicate soul, an impassioned imagination, like that of Shakspeare. He has lived hitherto, occupied in noble studies, apt in bodily and mental exercises, with a taste for art, loved by the noblest father, enamoured of the purest and most charming girl, confiding, generous, not yet having perceived, from the height of the throne to which he was born, aught but the beauty, happiness, grandeur of nature and humanity.[3] On this soul, which character and training make more sensitive than others, misfortune suddenly falls, extreme, overwhelming, of the very kind to destroy all faith and every spring of action: with one look he has seen all the vileness of humanity; and this insight is given him in his mother. His mind is yet intact; but judge from the violence of his style, the crudity of his exact details, the terrible tension of the whole nervous machine, whether he has not already one foot on the verge of madness:

[1] *Macbeth*, iv. 3. [2] *Ibid.* v. 5. [3] Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*.

'O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king, . . . so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
. . . And yet, within a month,—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body, . . .
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue!'[1]

Here already are contortions of thought, earnests of hallucination, the symptoms of what is to come after. In the middle of a conversation the image of his father rises before his mind. He thinks he sees him. How then will it be when the 'canonised bones have burst their cerements,' 'the sepulchre hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,' and when the ghost comes in the night, upon a high 'platform' of land, to hint to him of the tortures of his prison of fire, and to tell him of the fratricide, who has driven him thither? Hamlet grows faint, but grief strengthens him, and he has a cause for living:

'Hold, hold, my heart;
And you my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up! Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.—Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, . . .
And thy commandment all alone shall live. . . .
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark:
So, uncle, there you are.'[2] (*writing.*)

This convulsive outburst, this fevered writing hand, this phrensy of

[1] *Hamlet*, i. 2. [2] *Ibid.* i. 5.

intentness, prelude the approach of a monomania. When his friends come up, he treats them with the speeches of a child or an idiot. He is no longer master of his words; hollow phrases whirl in his brain, and fall from his mouth as in a dream. They call him; he answers by imitating the cry of a sportsman whistling to his falcon: 'Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.' Whilst he is in the act of swearing them to secrecy, the ghost below repeats 'Swear.' Hamlet cries, with a nervous excitement and a fitful gaiety:

> 'Ah ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?
> Come on—you hear this fellow in the cellarage,—
> Consent to swear. . . .
> *Ghost* (*beneath*). Swear.
> *Ham. Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground.
> Come hither, gentlemen. . . . Swear by my sword.
> *Ghost* (*beneath*). Swear.
> *Ham.* Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
> A worthy pioner!'[1]

Understand that as he says this his teeth chatter, 'pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other.' Intense anguish ends with a burst of laughter, which is nothing else than a spasm. Thenceforth Hamlet speaks as though he had a continuous nervous attack. His madness is feigned, I admit; but his mind, as a door whose hinges are twisted, swings and bangs to every wind with a mad precipitance and with a discordant noise. He has no need to search for the strange ideas, apparent incoherencies, exaggerations, the deluge of sarcasms which he accumulates. He finds them within him; he does himself no violence, he simply gives himself up to them. When he has the piece played which is to unmask his uncle, he raises himself, lounges on the floor, would lay his head in Ophelia's lap; he addresses the actors, and comments on the piece to the spectators; his nerves are strung, his excited thought is like a waving and crackling flame, and cannot find fuel enough in the multitude of objects surrounding it, upon all of which it seizes. When the king rises unmasked and troubled, Hamlet sings, and says, 'Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?'[2] And he laughs terribly, for he is resolved on murder. It is clear that this state is a disease, and that the man will not survive it.

In a soul so ardent of thought, and so mighty of feeling, what is left but disgust and despair? We tinge all nature with the colour of our thoughts; we shape the world according to our own ideas; when our soul is sick, we see nothing but sickness in the universe:

> 'This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majes

[1] *Hamlet*, i. 5. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 2.

tical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither.'

Henceforth his thought tarnishes whatever it touches. He rails bitterly before Ophelia against marriage and love. Beauty! Innocence! Beauty is but a means of prostituting innocence:

'Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? . . . What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us.'[2]

When he has killed Polonius by accident, he hardly repents it; it is one fool less. He jeers lugubriously:

'*King.* Now Hamlet, where's Polonius?
Hamlet. At supper.
K. At supper! where?
H. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.'[3]

And he repeats in five or six fashions these gravedigger jests. His thoughts already inhabit a churchyard: to this hopeless philosophy your true man is a corpse. Duties, honours, passions, pleasures, projects, science, all this is but a borrowed mask, which death removes, that we may see ourselves what we are, an evil-smelling and grinning skull. It is this sight he goes to see by Ophelia's grave. He counts the skulls which the gravedigger turns out: this was a lawyer's, that a courtier's. What salutations, intrigues, pretensions, arrogance! And here now is a clown knocking it about with his spade, and playing 'at loggats with 'em.' Cæsar and Alexander have turned to clay, and make the earth fat; the masters of the world have served to 'patch a wall.' 'Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that.'[4] When one has come to this, there is nothing left but to die.

This heated imagination, which explains Hamlet's nervous disease and his moral poisoning, explains also his conduct. If he hesitates to kill his uncle, it is not from horror of blood or from our modern scruples. He belongs to the sixteenth century. On board ship he wrote the order to behead Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and to do so without giving them 'shriving-time.' He killed Polonius, he caused Ophelia's death, and has no great remorse for it. If for once he spared his uncle, it was because he found him praying, and was afraid of sending him to heaven. He thought he was killing him, when he killed Polonius. What his imagination robs him of, is the coolness and strength to go quietly and with premeditation to plunge a sword into a breast. He can

[1] *Hamlet*, ii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 1. [3] *Ibid.* iv 3. [4] *Ibid.* v. 1.

only do the thing on a sudden suggestion; he must have a moment of enthusiasm; he must think the king is behind the arras, or else, seeing that he himself is poisoned, he must find his victim under his foil's point. He is not master of his acts; occasion dictates them; he cannot plan a murder, but must improvise it. A too lively imagination exhausts energy, by the accumulation of images and by the fury of intentness which absorbs it. You recognise in him a poet's soul, made not to act, but to dream, which is lost in contemplating the phantoms of its creation, which sees the imaginary world too clearly to play a part in the real world; an artist whom evil chance has made a prince, whom worse chance has made an avenger of crime, and who, destined by nature for genius, is condemned by fortune to madness and unhappiness. Hamlet is Shakspeare, and, at the close of this gallery of portraits which have all some features of his own, Shakspeare has painted himself in the most striking of all.

If Racine or Corneille had framed a psychology, they would have said, with Descartes: Man is an incorporeal soul, served by organs, endowed with reason and will, living in palaces or porticos, made for conversation and society, whose harmonious and ideal action is developed by discourse and replies, in a world constructed by logic beyond the realms of time and space.

If Shakspeare had framed a psychology, he would have said, with Esquirol:[1] Man is a nervous machine, governed by a mood, disposed to hallucinations, transported by unbridled passions, essentially unreasoning, a mixture of animal and poet, having no rapture but mind, no sensibility but virtue, imagination for prompter and guide, and led at random, by the most determinate and complex circumstances, to pain, crime, madness, and death.

IX.

Could such a poet always confine himself to the imitation of nature? Will this poetical world which is going on in his brain, never break loose from the laws of the world of reality? Is he not powerful enough to follow his own? He is; and the poetry of Shakspeare naturally finds an outlet in the fantastical. This is the highest grade of unreasoning and creative imagination. Despising ordinary logic, it creates therefrom another; it unites facts and ideas in a new order, apparently absurd, at bottom legitimate; it lays open the land of dreams, and its dreams deceive us like the truth.

When we enter upon Shakspeare's comedies, and even his half-dramas,[2] it is as though we met him on the threshold, like an actor to

[1] A French physician (1772–1844), celebrated for his endeavours to improve the treatment of the insane.—Tr.

[2] *Twelfth Night, As you Like it, Tempest, Winter's Tale,* etc. · *Cymbeline Merchant of Venice,* etc.

whom the prologue is committed, to prevent misunderstanding on the part of the public, and to tell them: 'Do not take too seriously what you are about to hear; I am joking. My brain, being full of fancies, desired to make plays of them, and here they are. Palaces, distant landscapes, transparent mists which blot the morning sky with their gray clouds, the red and glorious flames into which the evening sun descends, white cloisters in endless vista through the ambient air, grottos, cottages, the fantastic pageant of all human passions, the mad sport of unlooked-for chances,—this is the medley of forms, colours, sentiments, which I shuffle and mingle before me, a many-tinted skein of glistening silks, a slender arabesque, whose sinuous curves, crossing and confused, bewilder the mind by the whimsical variety of their infinite complications. Don't regard it as a picture Don't look for a precise composition, harmonious and increasing interest, the skilful management of a well-ordered and congruous plot. I have novels and romances in my mind which I am cutting up into scenes. Never mind the *finis*, I am amusing myself on the road. It is not the end of the journey which pleases me, but the journey itself. Is there any good in going so straight and quick? Do you only care to know whether the poor merchant of Venice will escape Shylock's knife? Here are two happy lovers, seated under the palace walls on a calm night; wouldn't you like to listen to the peaceful reverie which rises like a perfume from the bottom of their hearts?

> "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony.
> Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
> (*Enter musicians.*)
> Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:
> With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
> And draw her home with music.
> *Jessica.* I am never merry when I hear sweet music." [1]

'Have I not the right, when I see the big laughing face of a clownish servant, to stop near him, see him mouth, frolic, gossip, go through his hundred pranks and his hundred grimaces, and treat myself to the comedy of his spirit and gaiety? Two fine gentlemen pass by. I hear the rolling fire of their metaphors, and I follow their skirmish of

[1] *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1.

wit. Here in a corner is the artless arch face of a young wench. Do you forbid me to linger by her, to watch her smiles, her sudden blushes, the childish pout of her rosy lips, the coquetry of her pretty motions? You are in a great hurry if the prattle of this fresh and musical voice can't stop you. Is it no pleasure to view this succession of sentiments and figures? Is your fancy so dull, that you must have the mighty mechanism of a geometrical plot to shake it? My sixteenth century playgoers were easier to move. A sunbeam that had lost its way on an old wall, a foolish song thrown into the middle of a drama, occupied their mind as well as the blackest of catastrophes. After the horrible scene in which Shylock brandished his butcher's knife before Antonio's bare breast, they saw just as willingly the petty household wrangle, and the amusing bit of raillery which ends the piece. Like soft moving water, their soul rose and sank in an instant to the level of the poet's emotion, and their sentiments readily flowed in the bed he had prepared for them. They let him go about on his journey, and did not forbid him to make two voyages at once. They allowed several plots in one. If but the slightest thread united them, it was sufficient. Lorenzo eloped with Jessica, Shylock was frustrated in his revenge, Portia's suitors failed in the test imposed upon them; Portia, disguised as a doctor of laws, took from her husband the ring which he had promised never to part with; these three or four comedies, disunited, mingled, were shuffled and unfolded together, like an unknotted skein, in which threads of a hundred colours are entwined. Together with diversity, my spectators allowed improbability. Comedy is a slight winged creature, which flutters from dream to dream, whose wings you would break if you held it captive in the narrow prison of common sense. Do not press its fictions too hard; do not probe their contents. Let them float before your eyes like a charming swift dream. Let the fleeting apparition plunge back into the bright misty land from whence it came. For an instant it deceived you; let it suffice. It is sweet to leave the world of realities behind you; the mind can rest amidst impossibilities. We are happy when delivered from the rough chains of logic, when we wander amongst strange adventures, when we live in sheer romance, and know that we are living there. I do not try to deceive you, and make you believe in the world where I take you. One must disbelieve it in order to enjoy it. We must give ourselves up to illusion, and feel that we are giving ourselves up to it. We must smile as we listen. We smile in *The Winter's Tale*, when Hermione descends from her pedestal, and when Leontes discovers his wife in the statue, having believed her to be dead. We smile in *Cymbeline*, when we see the lone cavern in which the young princes have lived like savage hunters. Improbability deprives emotions of their sting. The events interest or touch us without making us suffer. At the very moment when sympathy is too lively, we remind ourselves that it is all a fancy. They become like distant objects, whose distance softens

their outline, and wraps them in a luminous veil of blue air. Your true comedy is an opera. We listen to sentiments without thinking too much of plot. We follow the tender or gay melodies without reflecting that they interrupt the action. We dream elsewhere on hearing music; here I bid you dream on hearing verse.'

So the prologue retires, and then the actors come on.

As you Like it is a caprice.[1] Action there is none; interest barely; likelihood still less. And the whole is charming. Two cousins, princes daughters, come to a forest with a court clown, Celia disguised as a shepherdess, Rosalind as a boy. They find here the old duke, Rosalind's father, who, driven out of his duchy, lives with his friends like a philosopher and a hunter. They find amorous shepherds, who with songs and prayers pursue intractable shepherdesses. They discover or they meet with lovers who become their husbands. Suddenly it is announced that the wicked Duke Frederick, who had usurped the crown, has just retired to a cloister, and restored the throne to the old exiled duke. Every one gets married, every one dances, everything ends with a 'rustic revelry.' Where is the pleasantness of these puerilities? First, the fact of its being puerile; the absence of the serious permits repose. There are no events, and there is no plot. We peacefully follow the easy current of graceful or melancholy emotions, which guides and conducts us without wearying. The place adds to the illusion and charm. It is an autumn forest, in which the warm rays permeate the blushing oak leaves, or the half-stript ashes tremble and smile to the feeble breath of evening. The lovers wander by brooks that 'brawl' under antique roots. As you listen to them, you see the slim birches, whose cloak of lace grows glossy under the slant rays of the sun that gilds them, and the thoughts wander down the mossy vistas in which their footfall is lost. What better place could be chosen for the comedy of sentiment and the play of heart-fancies? Is not this a fit spot in which to listen to love-talk? Some one has seen Orlando, Rosalind's lover, in this glade; she hears it and blushes. 'Alas the day! . . . What did he, when thou sawest him? What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? Where remains he? How parted he with thee? and when shalt thou see him again?' Then, with a lower voice, somewhat hesitating: 'Looks he as freshly as he did the day he wrestled?' Not yet exhausted: 'Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak. Sweet, say on.'[2] Question on question, she closes the mouth of her friend, who is ready to answer. At every word she jests, but agitated, blushing, with a forced gaiety; her bosom heaves, and her heart beats. Nevertheless she is calmer when Orlando

[1] In English, a word is wanting to express the French *fantaisie* used by M. Taine, in describing this scene: what in music is called a *capriccio*. Tennyson calls the *Princess* a medley, but it is ambiguous.—Tr.

[2] *As you Like it*, iii 2.

comes; bandies words with him; sheltered under her disguise, she makes him confess that he loves Rosalind. Then she plagues him, like the frolic, the wag, the coquette she is. 'Why, how now, Orlando, where have you been all this while? You a lover?' Orlando repeats his love, and she pleases herself by making him repeat it more than once. She sparkles with wit, jests, mischievous pranks; pretty fits of anger, feigned sulks, bursts of laughter, deafening babble, engaging caprices. 'Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour, and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very very Rosalind?' And every now and then she repeats with an arch smile, 'And I am your Rosalind; am I not your Rosalind?'[1] Orlando protests that he would die. Die! Who ever thought of dying for love! Leander? He took one bath too many in the Hellespont; so poets have said he died for love. Troilus? A Greek broke his head with a club; so poets have said he died for love. Come, come, Rosalind will be softer. And then she plays at marriage with him, and makes Celia pronounce the solemn words. She irritates and torments her pretended husband; tells him all the whims she means to indulge in, all the pranks she will play, all the bother he will have to endure. The retorts come one after another like fireworks. At every phrase we follow the looks of these sparkling eyes, the curves of this laughing mouth, the quick movements of this supple figure. It is a bird's petulance and volubility. 'O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love.' Then she plays with her cousin Celia, sports with her hair, calls her by every woman's name. Antitheses without end, words all a-jumble, quibbles, pretty exaggerations, word-racket; as you listen, you fancy it is the warbling of a nightingale. The trill of repeated metaphors, the melodious roll of the poetical gamut, the summer-symphony rustling under the foliage, change the piece into a veritable opera. The three lovers end by chanting a sort of trio. The first throws out a fancy the others take it up. Four times this strophe is renewed; and the symmetry of ideas, added to the jingle of the rhymes, makes of a dialogue a concerto of love:

> '*Phebe.* Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.
> *Silvius.* It is to be all made of sighs and tears;
> And so am I for Phebe.
> *P.* And I for Ganymede
> *O.* And I for Rosalind.
> *R.* And I for no woman. . . .
> *S.* It is to be all made of fantasy,
> All made of passion, and all made of wishes,
> All adoration, duty, and observance,
> All humbleness, all patience and impatience,
> All purity, all trial, all observance;
> And so I am for Phebe.

[1] *As you Like it*, iv. 1.

P. And so am I for Ganymede.
O. And so am I for Rosalind.
R. And so am I for no woman.'[1]

The necessity of singing is so urgent, that a minute later songs break out of themselves. The prose and the conversation end in lyric poetry. We pass straight on into these odes. We do not find ourselves in a new country. We feel the distraction and foolish gaiety as if it were a holiday. We see the graceful couple whom the song brings before us, passing in the misty light 'o'er the green corn-field,' amid the hum of sportive insects, on the finest day of the flowering spring-time. The unlikelihood grows natural, and we are not astonished when we see Hymen leading the two brides by the hand to give them to their husbands.

Whilst the young folks sing, the old folk talk. Their life also is a romance, but a sad one. Shakspeare's delicate soul, bruised by the shocks of social life, took refuge in contemplations of solitary life. To forget the strife and annoyances of the world, he must bury himself in a wide silent forest, and

'Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time.'[2]

We may look at the bright images which the sun carves on the white beech-boles, the shade of trembling leaves flickering on the thick moss, the long waves of the summit of the trees; the sharp sting of care is blunted; we suffer no more, simply remembering that we suffered once, we feel nothing but a gentle misanthropy, and being renewed, we are the better for it. The old duke is happy in his exile. Solitude has given him rest, delivered him from flattery, reconciled him to nature. He pities the stags which he is obliged to hunt for food:

'Come, shall we go and kill us venison?
And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
Being native burghers of this desert city,
Should in their own confines with forked heads
Have their round haunches gored.'[3]

Nothing sweeter than this mixture of tender compassion, dreamy philosophy, delicate sadness, poetical complaints, and rustic songs. One of the lords sings:

'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

[1] *As you Like it*, v. 2. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 7. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 1.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.'[1]

Amongst these lords is found a soul that suffers more, Jacques the melancholy, one of Shakspeare's best-loved characters, a transparent mask behind which we perceive the face of the poet. He is sad because he is tender; he feels the contact of things too keenly, and what leaves the rest indifferent, makes him weep.[2] He does not scold, he is sad; he does not reason, he is moved; he has not the combative spirit of a reforming moralist; his soul is sick and weary of life. Impassioned imagination leads quickly to disgust. Like opium, it excites and shatters. It leads man to the loftiest philosophy, then lets him down to the whims of a child. Jacques leaves the others brusquely, and goes to the quiet nooks to be alone. He loves his sadness, and would not exchange it for joy. Meeting Orlando, he says:

'Rosalind is your love's name?
O. Yes, just.
J. I do not like her name.'[3]

He has the fancies of a nervous woman. He is scandalised because Orlando writes sonnets on the forest trees. He is whimsical, and finds subjects of grief and gaiety, where others would see nothing of the sort:

'A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool; A miserable world!
As I do live by food, I met a fool;
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms and yet a motley fool. . . .
O noble fool! A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear. . . .
O that I were a fool!
I am ambitious for a motley coat.'[4]

The next minute he returns to his melancholy dissertations, bright pictures whose vivacity explains his character, and betrays Shakspeare, hiding under his name:

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players
They have their exits and their entrances·
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,

[1] *As you Like it*, ii. 7.

[2] Compare Jacques with the Alceste of Molière. It is the contrast between a misanthrope through reasoning, and one through imagination.

[3] *As you Like it*, iii. 2.

[4] *Ibid.* ii. 7.

And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.'[1]

As you Like it is a half-dream. *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a complete one.

The scene, buried in the far-off mist of fabulous antiquity, carries us back to Theseus, Duke of Athens, who is preparing his palace for his marriage with the beautiful queen of the Amazons. The style, loaded with contorted images, fills the mind with strange and splendid visions, and the airy elf-world divert the comedy into the fairy-land from whence it sprung.

Love is still the theme; of all sentiments, is it not the greatest fancy-weaver? But we have not here for language the charming tittle-tattle of Rosalind; it is glaring, like the season of the year. It does not brim over in slight conversations, in supple and skipping prose; it breaks forth into long rhyming odes, dressed in magnificent metaphors, sustained by impassioned accents, such as a warm night, odorous and star-spangled, inspires in a poet who loves. Lysander and Hermia agree to meet:

'*Lys.* To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.
Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie. . . .
There my Lysander and myself shall meet.'[2]

They get lost, and fall asleep, wearied, under the trees. Puck squeezes in the youth's eyes the juice of a magic flower, and changes his heart.

[1] *As you Like it*, ii. 7

[2] *Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 1

Presently, when he awakes, he will become enamoured of the first woman he sees. Meanwhile Demetrius, Hermia's rejected lover, wanders with Helena, whom he rejects, in the solitary wood. The magic flower changes him in turn: he now loves Helena. The lovers flee and pursue one another, beneath the lofty trees, in the calm night. We smile at their transports, their complaints, their ecstasies, and yet we join in them. This passion is a dream, and yet it moves us. It is like those airy webs which we find at morning on the crest of the hedgerows where the dew has spread them, and whose weft sparkles like a jewel-casket. Nothing can be more fragile, and nothing more graceful. The poet sports with emotions; he mingles, confuses, redoubles, interweaves them; he twines and untwines these loves like the mazes of a dance, and we see the noble and tender figures pass by the verdant bushes, under the radiant eyes of the stars, now wet with tears, now bright with rapture. They have the abandonment of true love, not the grossness of sensual love. Nothing causes us to fall from the ideal world in which Shakspeare conducts us. Dazzled by beauty, they adore it, and the spectacle of their happiness, their emotion, and their tenderness, is a kind of enchantment.

Above these two couples flutters and hums the swarm of elves and fairies. They also love. Titania, their queen, has a young boy for her favourite, son of an Indian king, of whom Oberon, her husband, wishes to deprive her. They quarrel, so that the elves creep for fear into the acorn cups, in the golden primroses. Oberon, by way of vengeance, touches Titania's sleeping eyes with the magic flower, and thus on waking the nimblest and most charming of the fairies finds herself enamoured of a stupid blockhead with an ass' head. She kneels before him; she sets on his 'hairy temples a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers:'

> 'And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
> Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
> Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,
> Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.'[1]

She calls round her all her fairy attendants:

> 'Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
> Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
> Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
> With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
> The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
> And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
> And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
> To have my love to bed and to arise;
> And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
> To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes. . . .
> Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

[1] *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv. 1

The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.'[1]

It was necessary, for her love brayed horribly, and to all the offers of Titania, replied with a petition for hay. What can be sadder and sweeter than this irony of Shakspeare? What raillery against love, and what tenderness for love! The sentiment is divine: its object unworthy. The heart is ravished, the eyes blind. It is a golden butterfly, fluttering in the mud; and Shakspeare, whilst painting its misery, preserves all its beauty:

'Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy. . . .
Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. . . .
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!'[2]

At the return of morning, when

'The eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams,'[3]

the enchantment ceases, Titania awakes on her couch of wild thyme and drooping violets. She drives the monster away; her recollections of the night are effaced in a vague twilight:

'These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.'[4]

And the fairies

'Go seek some dew drops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.'[5]

Such is Shakspeare's fantasy, a light tissue of bold inventions, of ardent passions, melancholy mockery, dazzling poetry, such as one of Titania's elves would have made. Nothing could be more like the poet's mind than these nimble genii, children of air and flame, whose flights 'compass the globe' in a second, who glide over the foam of the waves and skip between the atoms of the winds. Ariel flies, an invisible songster, around shipwrecked men to console them, discovers the thoughts of

[1] *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 1.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 2. [4] *Ibid.* iv. 1. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 1.

traitors, pursues the savage beast Caliban, spreads gorgeous visions before lovers, and does all in a lightning-flash:

> 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
> In a cowslip's bell I lie. . . .
> Merrily, merrily shall I live now
> Under the blossom that hangs on the bough. . . .
> I drink the air before me, and return
> Or ere your pulse twice beat.'[1]

Shakspeare glides over things on as swift a wing, by leaps as sudden, with a touch as delicate.

What a soul! what extent of action, and what sovereignty of an unique faculty! what diverse creations, and what persistence of the same impress! There they all are reunited, and all marked by the same sign, void of will and reason, governed by mood, imagination, or pure passion, destitute of the faculties contrary to those of the poet, dominated by the corporeal type which his painter's eyes have conceived, endowed by the habits of mind and by the vehement sensibility which he finds in himself.[2] Go through the groups, and you will only discover in them divers forms and divers states of the same power. Here, the flock of brutes, dotards, and gossips, made up of a mechanical imagination; further on, the company of men of wit, animated by a gay and foolish imagination; then, the charming swarm of women whom their delicate imagination raises so high, and their self-forgetting love carries so far; elsewhere the band of villains, hardened by unbridled passions, inspired by the artist's animation; in the centre the mournful train of grand characters, whose excited brain is filled with sad or criminal visions, and whom an inner destiny urges to murder, madness, or death. Ascend one stage, and contemplate the whole scene: the aggregate bears the same mark as the details. The drama reproduces promiscuously uglinesses, basenesses, horrors, unclean details, profligate and ferocious manners, the whole reality of life just as it is, when it is unrestrained by decorum, common sense, reason, and duty. Comedy, led through a phantasmagoria of pictures, gets lost in the likely and the unlikely, with no other check but the caprice of an amused imagination, wantonly disjointed, and romantic, an opera without music, a concerto of melancholy and tender sentiments, which bears the mind into the supernatural world, and brings before our eyes on its fairy-wings the genius which has created it. Look now. Do you not see the poet behind the crowd of his creations? They have heralded his approach; they have all shown somewhat of him. Ready, impetuous, impassioned, delicate, his genius is pure imagination, touched more vividly and by

[1] *Tempest*, v. 1

[2] There is the same law in the organic and in the moral world. It is what Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire calls unity of composition.

slighter things than ours. Hence his style, blooming with exuberant images, loaded with exaggerated metaphors, whose strangeness is like incoherence, whose wealth is superabundant, the work of a mind, which at the least incitement, produces too much and leaps too far. Hence his implied psychology, and his terrible penetration, which instantaneously perceiving all the effects of a situation, and all the details of a character, concentrates them in every response, and gives his figure a relief and a colouring which create illusion. Hence our emotion and tenderness. We say to him, as Desdemona to Othello: 'I love thee for the battles, sieges, fortunes thou hast passed, and for the distressful stroke that thy youth suffered.'

CHAPTER V.

The Christian Renaissance.

I. The vices of the Pagan Renaissance—Decay of the Southern civilisations.

II. The Reformation—Aptitude of the Germanic races, and suitability of Northern climates—Albert Durer's bodies and souls—His martyrdoms and last judgments—Luther—His conception of justice—Construction of Protestantism—Crisis of the conscience—Renovation of heart—Suppression of ceremonies—Transformation of the clergy.

III. The Reformation in England—Tyranny of the ecclesiastical courts—Disorders of the clergy—Irritation of the people—The interior of a diocese—Persecutions and convulsions—The translation of the Bible—How biblical events and Hebraic sentiments are in accordance with contemporary manners and with the English character—*The Prayer Book*—Moral and manly feeling of the prayers and offices—Preaching—Latimer—His education—Character—Familiar and persuasive eloquence—Death—The martyrs under Mary—England thenceforth Protestant.

IV. The Anglicans—Close connection between religion and society—How the religious sentiment penetrates literature—How the sentiment of the beautiful subsists in religion—Hooker—His breadth of mind and the fulness of his style—Hales and Chillingworth—Praise of reason and tolerance—Jeremy Taylor—His learning, imagination, and poetic feeling.

V. The Puritans—Opposition of religion and the world—Dogmas—Morality—Scruples—Their triumph and enthusiasm—Their work and practical sense.

VI. Bunyan—His life, spirit, and work—The Prospect of Protestantism in England.

I.

'I WOULD have my reader fully understand,' says Luther in the preface to his complete works, 'that I have been a monk and a bigoted Papist, so intoxicated, or rather so swallowed up in papistical doctrines, that I was quite ready, if I had been able, to kill or procure the death of those who should have rejected obedience to the Pope by so much as a syllable. I was not all cold or all ice in the Pope's defence, like Eckius and his like, who veritably seemed to me to constitute themselves his defenders rather for their belly's sake than because they looked at the matter seriously. More, to this day they seem to mock at him, like Epicureans. I for my part proceeded frankly, like a man who has horribly feared the day of judgment, and who yet

hoped to be saved with a shaking of all his bones.' Again, when he saw Rome for the first time, he prostrated himself, saying, 'I salute thee, holy Rome . . . bathed in the blood of so many martyrs.' Imagine, if you may, the effect which the shameless paganism of the Italian Renaissance had upon such a mind, so loyal, so Christian. The beauty of art, the charm of a refined and sensuous existence, had taken no hold upon him; he judged morals, and he judged them with his conscience only. He regarded this southern civilisation with the eyes of a man of the north, and understood its vices only, like Ascham, who said he had seen 'in Venice more libertie to sinne in IX dayes than ever I heard tell of in our noble Citie of London in IX yeare.'[1] Like Arnold and Channing in the present day, like all the men of Germanic[2] race and education, he was horrified at this voluptuous life, now reckless and now licentious, but always void of moral principles, given up to passion, rendered light by irony, shut in by the present, destitute of belief in the infinite, with no other worship than that of visible beauty, no other object than the search after pleasure, no other religion than the terrors of the imagination and the idolatry of the eyes.

'I would not,' said Luther afterwards, 'for a hundred thousand florins have gone without seeing Rome; I should always have doubted whether I was not doing injustice to the Pope.[3] The crimes of Rome are incredible; no one will credit so great a perversity who has not the witness of his eyes, ears, personal knowledge. . . . There reigned all the villanies and infamies, all the atrocious crimes, in particular blind greed, contempt of God, perjuries, sodomy. . . . We Germans swill liquor enough to split us, whilst the Italians are sober. But they are the most impious of men; they make a mock of true religion, they scorn the rest of us Christians, because we believe everything in Scripture. . . . There is a saying in Italy which they make use of when they go to church: "Come and let us conform to the popular error." "If we were obliged," they say again, "to believe in every word of God, we should be the most wretched of men, and we should never be able to have a moment's cheerfulness; we must put a good face on it, and not believe everything." This is what Leo X. did, who, hearing a discussion as to the immortality or mortality of the soul, took the latter side. "For," said he, "it would be terrible to believe in a future state. Conscience is an evil beast, who arms man against himself." . . . The Italians are either epicureans or superstitious. The people fear St. Anthony and St. Sebastian more than Christ, because of the plagues they send. This is why, when they want to prevent the Italians from committing a nuisance anywhere, they paint up St. Anthony with his fiery lance. Thus do they live in extreme superstition, ignorant of

[1] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570), ed. Arber, 1870, first book, p 83.

[2] See, in *Corinne*, Lord Nevil's judgment on the Italians.

[3] *Table Talk, passim.*

God's word, not believing the resurrection of the flesh, nor life everlasting, and fearing only temporal evils. Their blasphemy also is frightful, . . . and the cruelty of their revenge is atrocious. When they cannot get rid of their enemies in any other way, they lay ambush for them in the churches, so that one man cleft his enemy's head before the altar. . . . There are often murders at funerals on account of inheritances. . . . They celebrate the Carnival with extreme impropriety and folly for several weeks, and they have made a custom of various sins and extravagances at it, for they are men without conscience, who live in open sin, and make light of the marriage tie. . . . We Germans, and other simple nations, are like a bare clout; but the Italians are painted and speckled with all sorts of false opinions, and disposed still to embrace many worse. . . . Their fasts are more splendid than our most sumptuous feasts. They dress extravagantly; where we spend a florin on our clothes, they put down ten florins to have a silk coat. . . . When they (the Italians) are chaste, it is sodomy with them. There is no society amongst them. No one trusts another; they do not come together freely, like us Germans; they do not allow strangers to speak publicly with their wives: compared with the Germans, they are altogether men of the cloister.' These hard words are weak compared with the facts.[1] Treasons, assassinations, tortures, open debauchery, the practice of poisoning, the worst and most shameless outrages, are unblushingly and publicly tolerated in the open light of heaven. In 1490, the Pope's vicar having forbidden clerics and laics to keep concubines, the Pope revoked the decree, 'saying that that was not forbidden, because the life of priests and ecclesiastics was such that hardly one was to be found who did not keep a concubine, or at least who had not a courtesan.' Cæsar Borgia at the capture of Capua 'chose forty of the most beautiful women, whom he kept for himself; and a pretty large number of captives were sold at a low price at Rome.' Under Alexander VI., 'all ecclesiastics, from the greatest to the least, have concubines in the place of wives, and that publicly. If God hinder it not,' adds the historian, 'this corruption will pass to the monks and religious orders, although, to confess the truth, almost all the monasteries of the town have become bawd-houses, without any one to speak against it.' With respect to Alexander VI., who loved his daughter Lucretia, the reader may find in Burchard the description of the marvellous orgies in which he joined with Lucretia and Cæsar, and the enumeration of the prizes which he distributed. Let the reader also read for himself the story of the bestiality of Pietro Luigi Farnese, the Pope's son, how the young and upright Bishop of Fano died from his outrage, and how the Pope, speaking of this crime as 'a youthful levity,'

[1] See *Corpus historicorum medii ævi*, G. Eccard, vol. ii.: Joh. Burchardi, high chamberlain to Alexander VI., *Diarium*, p. 2134. Guicciardini, *Dell' istoria d'Italia*, p. 211 ed. Panthéon Littéraire.

gave him in this secret bull 'the fullest absolution from all the pains which he might have incurred by human incontinence, in whatever shape or with whatever cause.' As to civil security, Bentivoglio caused all the Marescotti to be put to death; Hippolyto d'Este had his brother's eyes put out in his presence; Cæsar Borgia killed his brother; murder is consonant with their public manners, and excites no wonder. A fisherman was asked why he had not informed the governor of the town that he had seen a body thrown into the water; 'he replied that he had seen about a hundred bodies thrown into the water during his lifetime in the same place, and that no one had ever troubled about it.' 'In our town,' says an old historian, 'much murder and pillage was done by day and night, and hardly a day passed but some one was killed.' Cæsar Borgia one day killed Peroso, the Pope's favourite, between his arms and under his cloak, so that the blood spurted up to the Pope's face. He caused his sister's husband to be stabbed and then strangled in open day, on the steps of the palace, count, if you can, his assassinations. Certainly he and his father, by their character, morals, open and systematic wickedness, have presented to Europe the two most successful images of the devil. To sum up in a word, it was on the model of this society, and for this society, that Machiavelli wrote his *Prince*. The complete development of all the faculties and all the lusts of man, the complete destruction of all the restraints and all the shame of man, are the two distinguishing marks of this grand and perverse culture. To make man a strong being, hedged about with genius, audacity, presence of mind, astute policy, dissimulation, patience, and to turn all this power to the acquisition of every kind of pleasure, pleasures of the body, of luxury, arts, literature, authority; that is, to form and to set free an admirable and formidable animal, very greedy and well armed,—such was his object; and the effect, after a hundred years, is visible. They tore one another to pieces like beautiful lions and superb panthers. In this society, which was turned into a circus, amid so many hatreds, and when exhaustion was setting in, the foreigner appeared: all bent beneath his lash; they were caged, and thus they pine away, in dull pleasures, with low vices,[1] bowing their backs. Despotism, the Inquisition, the Cicisbei, dense ignorance, and open knavery, the shamelessness and the smartness of harlequins and rascals, misery and vermin, —such is the issue of the Italian Renaissance. Like the old civilisations of Greece and Rome,[2] like the modern civilisations of Provence and Spain, like all southern civilisations, it bears in its bosom an irremediable vice, a bad and false conception of man. The Germans of the sixteenth century, like the Germans of the fourteenth century, have rightly

[1] See, in Casanova's *Mémoires*, the picture of this degradation. See also the *Memorie* of Scipione Rossi, on the convents of Tuscany at the close of the eighteenth century.

[2] From Homer to Constantine, the ancient city was an association of free men, whose aim was the conquest and destruction of other freemen.

judged it; with their simple common sense, with their fundamental honesty, they have put their fingers on the secret plague-spot. A society cannot be founded only on the pursuit of pleasure and power, a society can only be founded on the respect for liberty and justice. In order that the great human renovation which in the sixteenth century raised the whole of Europe might be perfected and endure, it was necessary that, meeting with another race, it might develop another culture, and that from a more wholesome conception of existence it might educe a better form of civilisation.

II.

Thus, side by side with the Renaissance, was born the Reformation. It also was in fact a new birth, one in harmony with the genius of the Germanic peoples. The distinction between this genius and others is its moral principles. Grosser and heavier, more given to gluttony and drunkenness,[1] these nations are at the same time more under the influence of conscience, firmer in the observance of their word, more disposed to self-denial and sacrifice. Such their climate has made them, and such they have continued, from Tacitus to Luther, from Knox to Gustavus Adolphus and Kant. In the course of time, and beneath the incessant action of the ages, the phlegmatic body, puffed out with gross food and strong drink, had become rusted, the nerves less excitable, the muscles less strung, the desires less seconded by action, the life more dull and slow, the soul more hardened and indifferent to the shocks of the body: mud, rain, snow, profusion of unpleasing and gloomy sights, the want of lively and delicate excitements of the senses, keep man in a militant attitude. Heroes in the barbarous ages, workers to-day, they endure weariness now as they courted wounds then; now, as then, nobility of soul appeals to them; thrown back upon the enjoyments of the soul, they find in these a world, the world of moral beauty. For them the ideal is displaced; it is no longer

[1] *Mémoires de la Margrave de Baireuth.* See also Misson, *Voyage en Italie*, 1700. Compare the manners of the students at the present day. 'The Germans are, as you know, wonderful drinkers: no people in the world are more flattering, more civil, more officious; but yet they have terrible customs in the matter of drinking. With them everything is done drinking; they drink in doing everything. There was not time during a visit to say three words, before you were astonished to see the collation arrive, or at least a few jugs of wine, accompanied by a plate of crusts of bread, dished up with pepper and salt; a fatal preparative for bad drinkers. You must be acquainted with the laws which are afterwards observed, sacred and inviolable laws. You must never drink without drinking to some one's health; also, after drinking, you must offer the wine to him whose health you have drunk. You must never refuse the glass which is offered to you, and you must naturally drain it to its last drop. Reflect a little, I beseech you, on these customs, and see how it is possible to cease drinking; accordingly, they never cease. In Germany it is a perpetual drinking-bout; to drink in Germany is to drink forever.'

amidst forms, made up of force and joy, but it is transferred to sentiments, made up of truth, law, attachment to duty, observance of order. What matters it if the storm rages and if it snows, if the wind blusters in the black pine-forests, or on the wan sea-surges where the sea-gulls scream, if a man, stiff and blue with cold, shutting himself up in his cottage, have but a dish of sourcrout or a piece of salt beef, under his smoky light and beside his fire of turf; another kingdom opens to reward him, the kingdom of inward contentment: his wife loves him, and is faithful; his children round his hearth spell out the old family Bible; he is the master in his home, the protector, the benefactor, honoured by others, honoured by himself; and if so be that he needs assistance, he knows that at the first appeal he will see his neighbours stand faithfully and bravely by his side. The reader need only refer to the portraits of the time, those of Italy and Germany; he will comprehend at a glance the two races and the two civilisations, the Renaissance and the Reformation: on one side, a half-naked condottiere in Roman costume, a cardinal in his robes, amply draped, in a rich arm-chair, carved and adorned with heads of lions, leaves, dancing fauns, he himself satirical and voluptuous, with the easy and dangerous look of a politician and man of the world, craftily poised and on his guard; on the other side, some honest doctor, a theologian, a simple man, with badly combed locks, stiff as a post, in his simple gown of coarse black serge, with big books of dogma ponderously clasped, a conscientious worker, an exemplary father of a family. See now the great artist of the age, a laborious and conscientious workman, a follower of Luther's,[1] a true Northman—Albert Durer. He also, like Raphael and Titian, has his ideal of man, an inexhaustible ideal, whence spring by hundreds living figures and the representations of manners, but how national and original! No care for expansive and happy beauty: to him nude bodies are but bodies undressed: straight shoulders, prominent stomachs, thin legs, feet pinched by shoes, his neighbour the carpenter's, or his gossip the sausage-seller's. The heads stand out in his etchings, remorselessly scraped and scooped away, savage or commonplace, often wrinkled by the fatigues of trade, generally sad, anxious, and patient, harshly and wretchedly transformed by the necessities of life. Where is the vista out of this minute copy of unsavoury truth? To what land will the lofty and melancholy imagination betake itself? The land of dreams, strange dreams, swarming with deep thoughts, sad contemplation of human destiny, a vague notion of the great enigma, groping reflection, which in the dimness of the rough woodcuts, amidst obscure emblems and fantastic figures, tries to seize upon truth and justice. There was no need to search so far; Durer had grasped them at the first effort. If there is any decency in the world, it is in the Madonnas

[1] See his letters, and the sympathy expressed for Luther

which are constantly springing to life under his pencil. He was not, like Raphael, beginning by making them nude; the most licentious hand would not venture to disturb one stiff fold of their robes; with infant in arms, they think but of him, and will never think beyond him; not only are they innocent, but they are virtuous. The good German housewife, for ever shut up, voluntarily and naturally, within her domestic duties and contentment, breathes out in all the fundamental sincerity, the seriousness, the unassailable loyalty of their attitudes and looks. He has done more; with this peaceful virtue he has painted a militant virtue. There at last is the genuine Christ, the man crucified, lean and fleshless through his agony, whose blood drops minute by minute in rarer drops, as the feebler and feebler pulsations give warning of the last throe of a dying life. Not here, as in the Italian masters, a sight to charm the eyes, a mere flow of drapery, a disposition of groups. The heart, the very heart, is wounded by this sight: it is the just man oppressed, who is dying because the world hates justice. The mighty, the men of the age, are there, indifferent, satirical: a plumed knight, a big-bellied burgomaster, who, with hands folded behind his back, looks on, kills an hour. But the rest weep; above the fainting women, angels full of anguish catch in their vessels the holy blood as it trickles down, and the stars of heaven veil their face not to behold so tremendous an outrage. Other outrages will come after; tortures manifold, and the true martyrs beside the true Christ, resigned, silent, with the sweet expression of the earliest believers. They are bound to an old tree, and the executioner tears them with his iron-pointed lash. A bishop with clasped hands is praying where they have stretched him, whilst an auger is being screwed into his eye. Above, amid the interlacing trees and gnarled roots, a band of men and women climb under the lash the breast of a hill, and from the crest they are hurled at the lance's point into the abyss; here and there roll heads, stiffening bodies; and by the side of those who are being decapitated, the swollen corpses, impaled, await the croaking ravens. All these sufferings must be undergone for the confession of faith and the establishment of justice. But above there is a guardian, an avenger, an all-powerful Judge, whose day shall come. This light will shine, and the piercing rays of the last sun already play, like a handful of darts, across the darkness of the age. In the summit of heaven appears the angel in his shining robe, leading the eager hosts, the flashing swords, the inevitable arrows of the avengers, who are to trample upon and punish the earth; mankind falls down beneath their charge, and now the jaw of the infernal monster grinds the head of the wicked prelates. This is the popular poem of conscience, and from the days of the apostles, man has not had a more sublime and complete conception.[1]

[1] See a collection of Albert Durer's wood-carvings. Remark the resemblance of his *Apocalypse* to Luther's familiar *Table Talk*.

For conscience, like other things, has its poem; by a natural invasion the all-powerful idea of justice overflows from the soul, covers heaven, and enthrones there a new deity. A formidable deity, who is scarcely like the calm intelligence which serves philosophers to explain the order of things; nor to that tolerant deity, a kind of constitutional king, whom Voltaire discovered at the end of a chain of argument, whom Beranger sings of as of a comrade, and whom he salutes 'sans lui demander rien.' It is the just Judge, sinless and stern, who exacts of man a strict account of his visible actions and of all his invisible feelings, who tolerates no forgetfulness, no dejection, no failing, before whom every approach to weakness or error is an outrage and a treason. What is our justice before this strict justice? People lived at peace in the times of ignorance; at most, when they felt themselves to blame, they went for absolution to a priest; all was ended by their buying a kindly indulgence; there was a tariff, as there still is; Tetzel the Dominican declares that all sins are blotted out 'as soon as the money chinks in the box.' Whatever be the crime, there is a quittance; even '*si Dei matrem violavisset*,' he might go home clean and sure of heaven. Unfortunately the vendors of pardons did not know that all was changed, and that the intellect was become manly, no longer gabbling words mechanically like a catechism, but sounding them anxiously like a truth. In the universal Renaissance, and in the mighty growth of all human ideas, the German idea of duty blooms like the rest. Now, when we speak of justice, it is no longer a lifeless phrase which we repeat, but a living idea which we produce; man sees the object which it represents, and feels the emotion which summons it up; he no longer receives, but he creates it; it is his work and his tyrant; he makes it, and submits to it. 'These words *justus* and *justitia Dei*,' says Luther, 'were a thunder to my conscience. I shuddered to hear them; I told myself, if God is just, He will punish me.'[1] For as soon as the conscience discovers the idea of the perfect model,[2] the least feelings appeared to them to be crimes, and man, condemned by his own scruples, fell prostrate, and, 'as it were, swallowed up' with horror. 'I, who lived the life of a spotless monk,' says Luther, 'yet felt within me the troubled conscience of a sinner, without managing to assure myself as to the satisfaction which I owed to God. . . . Then I said to myself: Am I then the only one who ought to be sad in my spirit? . . .

[1] Calvin the logician of the Reformation, well explains the dependence of all the Protestant ideas in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, i. (1.) The idea of the perfect God, the stern Judge. (2.) The alarm of conscience. (3.) The impotence and corruption of nature. (4.) The advent of free grace. (5.) The rejection of rites and ceremonies.

[2] 'In the measure in which pride is rooted within us, it always appears to us as though we were just and whole, good and holy; unless we are convinced by manifest arguments of our injustice, uncleanness, folly, and impurity. For we are not convinced of it if we turn our eyes to our own persons merely, and

Oh, what horrible spectres and figures I used to see!' Thus alarmed, conscience believes that the terrible day is at hand. 'The end of the world is near. . . . Our children will see it; perchance we ourselves. Once in this mood he had terrible dreams for six months at a time. Like the Christians of the Apocalypse, he fixes the moment: it will come at Easter, or at the Conversion of Saint Paul. One theologian, his friend, thought of giving all his goods to the poor; 'but would they receive it?' he said. 'To-morrow night we shall be seated in heaven. Under such anguish the body gives way. For fourteen days Luther was in such a condition, that he could neither drink, eat, nor sleep. 'Day and night,' his eyes fixed on a text of Saint Paul, he saw the Judge, and His inevitable hands. Such is the tragedy which is enacted in all Protestant souls—the eternal tragedy of the conscience; and its issue is a new religion.

For nature alone and unassisted cannot rise from this abyss by itself. 'It is so corrupted, that it does not feel the desire for heavenly things. . . . There is in it before God nothing but lust.' Good intentions cannot spring from it. 'For, terrified by the vision of his sin, man could not resolve to do good, troubled and anxious as he is; on the contrary, abased and crushed by the weight of his sin, he falls into despair and hatred of God, as it was with Cain, Saul, Judas;' so that, abandoned to himself, he can find nothing within him but the rage and the oppression of a despairing wretch or a devil. In vain he might try to recover himself by good works: our good deeds are not pure; even though pure, they do not wipe out the stain of previous sins, and moreover they do not take away the original corruption of the heart: they are only boughs and blossoms, the inherited poison is in the sap. Man must descend to the heart, underneath literal obedience and the reach of law; from the kingdom of law he must penetrate into that of grace; from exacted righteousness to spontaneous goodness; beneath his original nature, which led him to selfishness and earthly things, a second nature is developed, leading him to sacrifice and heavenly things. Neither my works, nor my justice, nor the works or justice of any creature or of all creatures, could work in me this wonderful change. One alone can do it, the pure God, the Just Victim, the Saviour, the Redeemer, Jesus, my Christ, by imputing to me His justice, by pouring upon me His merits, by drowning my sin under His sacrifice.

if we do not think also of God, who is the only rule by which we must shape and complete this judgment. . . . And then that which had a fair appearance of virtue will be found to be nothing but weakness.

'This is the source of that horror and wonder by which the Scriptures tell us the saints were afflicted and cast down, when and as often as they felt the presence of God. For we see those who were as it might be far from God, and who were confident and went about with a stiff neck, as soon as He displayed His glory to them, they were shaken and terrified, so much so that they were overwhelmed, nay swallowed up in the horror of death, and that they fainted away'

The world is a 'mass of perdition,'[1] predestined to hell. Lord Jesus, draw me back, select me from this mass. I have no claim to it; there is nothing in me not abominable; this very prayer is inspired and formed within me by Thee. But I weep, and my breast heaves, and my heart is broken. Lord, let me feel myself redeemed, pardoned, Thy elect one, Thy faithful one; give me grace, and give me faith! 'Then,' says Luther, 'I felt myself born anew, and it seemed that I was entering the open gates of heaven.'

What remains to be done after this renovation of the heart? Nothing: all religion is in that: the rest must be reduced or suppressed; it is a personal affair, a secret dialogue between man and God, where there are only two things in question,—the very word of God as it is transmitted by Scripture, and the emotions of the heart of man, as the word of God excites and maintains them.[2] Let us do away with the rites that appeal to the senses, wherewith men would replace this intercourse between the invisible mind and the visible judge,—mortifications, fasts, corporeal penance, Lent, vows of chastity and poverty, rosaries, indulgences; rites serve only to smother living piety beneath mechanical works. Away with the mediators by which men have attempted to impede the direct intercourse between God and man,—namely, saints, the Virgin, the Pope, the priest; whosoever adores or obeys them is an idolater. Neither saints nor Virgin can convert or save us; God alone by His Christ can convert and save. Neither Pope nor priest can fix our faith or forgive our sins; God alone instructs us by His word, and absolves us by His pardon. No more pilgrimages or relics; no more traditions or auricular confessions. A new church appears, and therewith a new worship; ministers of religion change their tone, the worship of God its form; the authority of the clergy is diminished, and the pomp of services is reduced: they are reduced and diminished the more, because the primitive idea of the new theology is more absorbing; so much so, that in certain sects they have disappeared altogether. The priest descends from the lofty position in which the right of forgiving sins and of regulating faith had raised him over the heads of the laity; he returns to civil society, marries like the rest, begins to be once more an equal, is merely a more learned and pious man than

[1] Saint Augustine.

[2] Melanchthon, preface to *Luther's Works:* 'It is clear that the works of Thomas, Scotus, and the like, are utterly silent about the element of justification by faith, and contain many errors concerning the most important questions relating to the church. It is clear that the discourses of the monks in their churches almost throughout the world were either fables about purgatory and the saints, or else some kind of dogma of law or discipline, without a word of the gospel concerning Christ, or else were vain trifles about distinctions in the matter of food, about feasts and other human traditions. . . . The gospel is pure, incorruptible, and not diluted with Gentile opinions.' See also Fox, *Acts and Monuments,* 8 vols., ed. Townsend, 1843, ii. 42.

others, their elect and their adviser. The church becomes a temple, empty of images, decorations, ceremonies, sometimes altogether bare; a simple meeting-house, where, between whitewashed walls, from a plain pulpit, a man in a black gown speaks without gesticulations, reads a passage from the Bible, begins a hymn, which the congregation takes up. There is another place of prayer, as little adorned and not less venerated, the domestic hearth, where every night the father of the family, before his servants and his children, prays aloud and reads the Scriptures. An austere and free religion, purged from sensualism and obedience, interior and personal, which, set on foot by the awakening of the conscience, could only be established among races in which each man found within his nature the persuasion that he alone is responsible for his actions, and always bound to the observance of his duty.

III.

It must be admitted that the Reformation entered England by a side door; but it is enough that it came in, whatever the manner: for great revolutions are not introduced by court intrigues and official sleight of hand, but by social conditions and popular instincts. When five millions of men are converted, it is because five millions of men wish to be converted. Let us therefore leave on one side the intrigues in high places, the scruples and passions of Henry VIII.,[1] the pliability and plausibility of Cranmer, the vacillations and basenesses of the Parliament, the oscillation and tardiness of the Reformation, begun, then arrested, then pushed forward, then with one blow violently pushed back, then spread over the whole nation, and hedged in by a legal establishment, a singular establishment, built up from discordant materials, but yet solid and durable. Every great change has its root in the soul, and we have only to look close into this deep soil to discover the national inclinations and the secular irritations from which Protestantism has issued.

A hundred and fifty years before, it had been on the point of bursting forth; Wycliff had appeared, the Lollards had sprung up, the Bible had been translated; the Commons had proposed the confiscation of ecclesiastical property; then, under the pressure of the united Church, royalty and aristocracy, the growing Reformation being crushed, disappeared underground, only to reappear at long intervals by the sufferings of its martyrs. The bishops had received the right of imprisoning without trial laymen suspected of heresy; they had burned Lord Cobham alive; the kings chose their ministers from the bench; settled in authority and pride, they had made the nobility and people bend under the secular sword which had been entrusted to them, and in their hands the stern network of law, which from the Conquest had compressed the nation in its iron grasp, had become more stringent

[1] See Froude, *History of England*, i.–vi. The conduct of Henry VIII. is there presented in a new light.

and more injurious. Venial acts had been construed into crimes, and the judicial repression, extended to faults as well as to outrages, had changed the police into an inquisition. '"Offences against chastity," "heresy," or "matter sounding thereunto," "witchcraft," "drunkenness," "scandal," "defamation," "impatient words," "broken promises," "untruth," "absence from church," "speaking evil of saints," "non payment of offerings," complaints against the constitutions of the courts themselves;'[1] all these transgressions, imputed or suspected, brought folk before the ecclesiastical tribunals, at enormous expense, with long delays, from great distances, under a captious procedure, resulting in heavy fines, strict imprisonments, humiliating abjurations, public penances, and the menace, often fulfilled, of torture and the stake Judge from a single fact: the Earl of Surrey, a relative of the king, was accused before one of these tribunals of having neglected a fast Imagine, if you can, the minute and incessant oppressiveness of such a code; to what a point the whole of human life, visible actions and invisible thoughts, was surrounded and held down by it; how by enforced accusations it penetrated to every hearth and into every conscience; with what shamelessness it was transformed into a vehicle for extortions; what secret anger it excited in these townsfolk, these peasants, obliged sometimes to travel sixty miles and back, to leave in one or other of the numberless talons of the law[2] a part of their savings, sometimes their whole substance and that of their children. A man begins to think when he is thus down-trodden; he asks himself quietly if it is really by divine dispensation that mitred thieves thus practise tyranny and pillage; he looks more closely into their lives; he wants to know if they themselves practise the regularity which they impose on others; and on a sudden he learns strange things. Cardinal Wolsey writes to the Pope, that 'both the secular and regular priests were in the habit of committing atrocious crimes, for which, if not in orders, they would have been promptly executed;[3] and the laity were scandalised to see such persons not only not degraded, but escaping with complete impunity.' A priest convicted of incest with the prioress of Kilbourn was simply condemned to carry a cross in a procession, and to pay three shillings and fourpence; at which rate, I fancy, he would renew the practice. In the preceding reign (Henry VII.) the gentlemen and farmers of Carnarvonshire had laid a complaint accusing the clergy of systematically seducing their wives and daughters. There were brothels in London for the especial use of priests. As to the abuse of the confessional, read in the original the familiarities to which it opened the door.[4] The

[1] Froude, i. 191. *Petition of Commons.* This public and authentic protest shows up all the details of clerical organisation and oppression.

[2] Froude, i. 26; ii. 192. [3] In May 1528. Froude, i. 194.

[4] Hale, *Criminal Causes. Suppression of the Monasteries*, Camden Soc. Publications. Froude, i. 194–201.

bishops gave livings to their children whilst they were still young. The holy Father Prior of Maiden Bradley hath but six children, and but one daughter married yet of the goods of the monastery; trusting shortly to marry the rest. The monks used to drink after supper till ten or twelve next morning, and come to matins drunk. They played cards or dice. Some came to service in the afternoons, and only then for fear of corporal punishments. The royal visitors found concubines in the secret apartments of the abbots. At the nunnery of Sion, the confessors seduced the nuns and absolved them at the same time. There were convents, Burnet tells us, where all the recluses were found pregnant. About 'two-thirds' of the English monks lived in such sort, that 'when their enormities were first read in the Parliament House, there was nothing but "Down with them!"'[1] What a spectacle for a nation in whom reason and conscience were awakening! Long before the great outburst, the public indignation muttered ominously, and was accumulating for the revolt; priests were yelled at in the streets or 'thrown into the kennel;' women would not 'receive the sacrament from hands which they thought polluted.'[2] When the apparitor of the ecclesiastical courts came to serve a process, he was driven away with insults. 'Go thy way, thou stynkyng knave, ye are but knaves and brybours everych one of you.' A mercer broke an apparitor's head with his yard. 'A waiter at the sign of the Cock' said 'that the sight of a priest did make him sick, and that he would go sixty miles to indict a priest.' Bishop Fitz-James wrote to Wolsey, that the juries in London were 'so maliciously set *in favorem hæreticæ pravitatis*, that they will cast and condemn any clerk, though he were as innocent as Abel.'[3] Wolsey himself spoke to the Pope of the 'dangerous spirit' which was spread abroad among the people, and he foresaw a Reformation. When Henry VIII. laid the axe to the tree, and slowly, with mistrust, struck a blow, then a second lopping off the branches, there were a thousand, nay, a hundred thousand hearts which approved of it, and would themselves have struck the trunk.

Consider the internal state of a diocese, that of Lincoln for instance,[4] at this period, about 1521, and judge by this example of the manner in which the ecclesiastical machinery works throughout the whole of England, multiplying martyrs, hatreds, and conversions. Bishop Longland summons the relatives of the accused, brothers, women, and children, and administers the oath; as they have already been prosecuted and have abjured, they must make oath, or they are relapsed, and the fagots await them. Then they denounce their kinsman and

[1] Latimer's *Sermons*.

[2] They called them '*horsyn prestes*,' '*horson*,' or '*whorson knaves*.' Hall, p. 99; quoted by Froude, i. 199.

[3] Froude, i. 101 (1514).

[4] Fox, *Acts and Monuments*, iv. 221.

themselves. One has taught the other in English the Epistle of Saint James. This man, having forgotten several words of the *Pater* and *Credo* in Latin, can only repeat them in English. A woman turned her face from the cross which was carried about on Easter morning Several at church, especially at the moment of the elevation, would not say their prayers, and remained seated 'dumb as beasts.' Three men, including a carpenter, passed a night together reading a book of the Scriptures. A pregnant woman went to mass not fasting. A brazier denied the Real Presence. A brickmaker kept the Apocalypse in his possession. A thresher said, as he pointed to his work, that he was going to make God come out of his straw. Others spoke lightly of pilgrimage, or of the Pope, or of relics, or of confession. And then fifty of them were condemned the same year to abjure, to promise to denounce each other, and to do penance all their lives, on pain of being burnt as relapsed heretics. They were shut up in different 'monasteries;' there they were to be maintained by alms, and to work for their support; they were to appear with a fagot on their shoulders at market, and in the procession on Sunday, then in a general procession, then at the punishment of a heretic; 'they were to fast on bread and ale only every Friday during their life, and every Even of Corpus Christy on bread and water, and carry a visible mark on their cheek.' Beyond that, six were burnt alive, and the children of one, John Scrivener, were obliged themselves to set fire to their father's wood pile. Do you think that a man, burnt or shut up, was altogether done with? He is silenced, I admit, or he is hidden; but long memories and bitter resentments endure under a forced silence. People saw[1] their companion, relation, brother, bound by an iron chain, with clasped hands, praying amid the smoke, whilst the flame blackened his skin and destroyed his flesh. Such sights are not forgotten; the last words uttered on the fagot, the last appeals to God and Christ, remain in their hearts all-powerful and ineffaceable. They carry them about with them, and silently ponder over them in the fields, at their labour, when they think themselves alone; and then, darkly, passionately, their brains work. For, beyond this universal sympathy which gathers mankind about the oppressed, there is the working of the religious sentiment. The crisis of conscience has begun which is natural to this race; they meditate on salvation, they are alarmed at their condition: terrified at the judgments of God, they ask themselves whether, living under imposed obedience and ceremonies, they do not become culpable, and merit damnation. Can this terror be smothered by prisons and torture? Fear against fear, the only question is, which is the strongest? They will soon know it: for the peculiarity of these inward anxieties is that they grow beneath

[1] See, *passim*, the prints of Fox. All the details which follow are from biographies. See those of Cromwell, by Carlyle, of Fox the Quaker, of Bunyan, and the trials reported at length by Fox.

constraint and oppression; as a welling spring which we vainly try to stamp out under stones, they bubble and leap up and swell, until their excessive accumulation bursts out, disjointing or splitting the regular masonry under which men endeavoured to bury them. In the solitude of the fields, or during the long winter nights, men dream; soon they fear, and become gloomy. On Sunday at church, obliged to cross themselves, to kneel before the cross, to receive the host, they shudder, and think it a mortal sin. They cease to talk to their friends, remain for hours with bowed heads, sorrowful; at night their wives hear them sigh; unable to sleep, they rise from their beds. Picture such a wan figure, full of anguish, nourishing under his sternness and coolness a secret ardour: he is still to be found in England in the poor shabby dissenter, who, Bible in hand, stands up suddenly to preach at a street corner; in those long-faced men who, after the service, not having had enough of the prayers, sing a hymn out in the street. The sombre imagination has started, like a woman in labour, and its conception swells day by day, tearing him who contains it. Through the long muddy winter, the complaint of the wind sighing among the ill-fitting rafters, the melancholy of the sky, continually flooded with rain or covered with clouds, add to the gloom of the lugubrious dream. Thenceforth man has made up his mind; he will be saved at all costs. At the peril of his life, he obtains one of the books which teach the way of salvation, Wycliff's *Wicket Gate*, *The Obedience of a Christian*, or sometimes Luther's *Revelation of Antichrist*, but above all some portion of the word of God, which Tyndale had just translated. One hid his books in a hollow tree; another learned by heart an epistle or a gospel, so as to be able to ponder it to himself even in the presence of his accusers. When sure of his friend, he speaks with him in private; and peasant talking to peasant, labourer to labourer—you know what the effect would be. It was the yeomen's sons, as Latimer said, who more than all others maintained the faith of Christ in England;[1] and it was with the yeomen's sons that Cromwell afterwards reaped his Puritan victories. When such words are whispered through a nation, all official voices clamour in vain: the nation has found its poem, it stops its ears to the troublesome would-be distractors, and presently sings it out with a full voice and from a full heart.

But the contagion had even reached the men in office, and Henry VIII. at last permitted the English Bible to be published.[2] England had her book. Every one, says Strype, who could buy this book either read it assiduously, or had it read to him by others, and many well advanced in years learned to read with the same object. On Sunday the poor folk gathered at the bottom of the churches to hear it read.

[1] Froude, ii. 33: 'The bishops said in 1529, "In the crime of heresy, thanked be God, there hath no notable person fallen in our time."'

[2] In 1536. Strype's *Memorials*, appendix. Froude, iii. ch. 12.

Maldon, a young man, afterwards related that he had clubbed his savings with an apprentice to buy a New Testament, and that for fear of his father, they had hidden it in their straw mattress. In vain the king in his proclamation had ordered people not to rest too much upon their own sense, ideas, or opinions; not to reason publicly about it in the public taverns and alehouses, but to have recourse to learned and authorised men; the seed sprouted, and they chose rather to take God's word in the matter than men's. Maldon declared to his mother that he would not kneel to the crucifix any longer, and his father in a rage beat him severely, and was ready to hang him. The preface itself invited men to independent study, saying that 'the Bishop of Rome has studied long to keep the Bible from the people, and specially from princes, lest they should find out his tricks and his falsehoods; . . . knowing well enough, that if the clear sun of God's word came over the heat of the day, it would drive away the foul mist of his devilish doctrines.'[1] Even on the admission, then, of official voices, they had there the pure and the whole truth, not merely speculative but moral truth, without which we cannot live worthily or be saved. Tyndale the translator says:

'The right waye (yea and the onely waye) to understand the Scripture unto salvation, is that we ernestlye and above all thynge serche for the profession of our baptisme or covenauntes made betwene God and us. As for an example. Christe sayth, Mat. v., Happy are the mercyfull, for they shall obtayne mercye. Lo, here God hath made a covenaunt wyth us, to be mercyfull unto us, yf we wyll be mercyfull one to another.'

What an expression! and with what ardour men pricked by the ceaseless reproaches of a scrupulous conscience, and the presentiment of the dark future, would lavish on these pages the whole attention of eyes and heart!

I have before me one of these old square folios,[2] in black letter, in which the pages, worn by horny fingers, have been patched together, in which an old engraving figures forth to the poor folk the deeds and menaces of the God of Israel, in which the preface and table of contents point out to simple people the moral which is to be drawn from each tragic history, and the application which is to be made of each venerable precept. Hence have sprung much of the English language, and half of the English manners; to this day the country is biblical;[3] it was these big books which had transformed Shakspeare's England. To understand this great change, try to picture these yeomen, these shopkeepers, who in the evening placed this Bible on their table, and bareheaded, with veneration, heard or read one of its chapters. Think that they have no other books, that theirs was a virgin mind, that every

[1] Coverdale. Froude, iii. 81.
[2] 1549. Tyndale's translation.
[3] An expression of Stendhal's; it was his general impression.

impression would make a furrow, that the monotony of mechanical existence rendered them entirely open to new emotions, that they opened this book not for amusement, but to discover in it their doom of life and death; in brief, that the sombre and impassioned imagination of the race raised them to the level of the grandeurs and terrors which were to pass before their eyes. Tyndale, the translator, wrote with such sentiments, condemned, hunted, in concealment, his spirit full of the idea of a speedy death, and of the great God for whom at last he mounted the funeral pyre; and the spectators who had seen the remorse of Macbeth[1] and the murders of Shakspeare can listen to the despair of David, and the massacres accumulated under Judges and Kings. The short Hebrew verse-style took hold upon them by its uncultivated severity. They have no need, like the French, to have the ideas developed, explained in fine clear language, to be modified and bound together.[2] The serious and pulsating tone shakes them at once; they understand it with the imagination and the heart; they are not, like Frenchmen, enslaved to logical regularity; and the old text, so confused, so lofty and terrible, can retain in their language its wildness and its majesty. More than any people in Europe, by their innate concentration and rigidity, they realise the Semitic conception of the solitary and almighty God; a strange conception, which we, with all our critical methods, have hardly reconstructed at the present day. For the Jew, for the powerful minds who wrote the Pentateuch,[3] for the prophets and authors of the Psalms, life as we conceive it, was secluded from living things, plants, animals, firmament, sensible objects, to be carried and concentrated entirely in the one Being of whom they are the work and the puppets. Earth is the footstool of this great God, heaven is His garment. He is in the world, amongst His creatures, as an Oriental king in his tent, amidst his arms and his carpets. If you enter this tent, all vanishes before the idea of the master; you see but him; nothing has an individual and independent existence: these arms are but made for his hands, these carpets for his foot; you imagine them only as spread for him and trodden by him. The awe-inspiring face and the menacing voice of the irresistible lord appear behind his instruments. So far, the Jew, nature, and men are nothing of themselves; they are for the service of God: they have no other reason for existence; no other use: they vanish before the vast and solitary Being who, spread wide and set high as a mountain before human thought, occupies and covers in Himself the whole horizon. Vainly we attempt, we seed of the Aryan race, to figure this devouring God;

[1] The time of which M. Taine speaks, and the translation of Tyndale, precede by at least fifty years the appearance of *Macbeth* (1606). Shakspeare's audience read the present authorised translation. —Tr.

[2] See Lemaistre de Sacy's translation, so slightly biblical.

[3] See Ewald, *Geschichte des Volks Israel*, his apostrophe to the third writer of the Pentateuch, *Erhabener Geist*, etc.

we always leave some beauty, some interest, some part of free existence to nature; we but half attain to the Creator, with difficulty, after a chain of reasoning, like Voltaire and Kant; more readily we make Him into an architect; we naturally believe in natural laws; we know that the order of the world is fixed; we do not crush things and their relations under the feet of an arbitrary sovereignty; we do not grasp the sublime sentiment of Job, who sees the world trembling and swallowed up at the touch of the strong hand; we cannot endure the intense emotion or repeat the marvellous accent of the Psalms, in which, amid the silence of beings reduced to atoms, nothing remains but the heart of man speaking to the eternal Lord. These, in the anguish of a troubled conscience, and the oblivion of sensible nature, renew it in part. If the strong and fierce cheer of the Arab, which breaks forth like the blast of a trumpet at the sight of the rising sun and of the naked solitudes,[1] if the mental trances, the short visions of a luminous and grand landscape, if the Semitic colouring are wanting, at least the seriousness and simplicity have remained; and the Hebraic God brought into the modern conscience, is no less a sovereign in this narrow precinct than in the deserts and mountains from which He sprang. His image is reduced, but His authority is entire; if He is less poetical, He is more moral. Men read with awe and trembling the history of His works, the tables of His law, the archives of His vengeance, the proclamation of His promises and menaces: they are filled with them. Never has a people been seen so deeply imbued by a foreign book, has let it penetrate so far into its manners and writings, its imagination and language. Thenceforth they have found their King, and will follow Him; no word, lay or ecclesiastic, shall prevail over His word; they have submitted their conduct to Him, they will give body and life for Him; and if need be, a day will come when, out of fidelity to Him, they will overthrow the State.

It is not enough to hear this King, they must answer Him; and religion is not complete until the prayer of the people is added to the revelation of God. In 1548, at last, England received her Prayer-book[2] from the hands of Cranmer, Peter Martyr, Bernard Ochin, Melanchthon; the chief and most ardent reformers of Europe were invited to compose a body of doctrines conformable to Scripture, and to express a body of sentiments conformable to the true Christian life,—an admirable book, in which the full spirit of the Reformation breathes out, where, beside the moving tenderness of the gospel, and the manly accents of the Bible, throb the profound emotion, the grave eloquence, the noble-mindedness, the restrained enthusiasm of the heroic and

[1] See Ps. civ. in Luther's admirable translation and in the English translation.

[2] The first Primer of note was in 1545; Froude, v. 141. The Prayer-book underwent several changes in 1552, others under Elizabeth, and a few, last'y, at the Restoration.

poetic souls who had re-discovered Christianity, and had passed near the fire of martyrdom.

'Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore Thou them that are penitent; According to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life.'

'Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.'

The same idea of sin, repentance, and moral renovation continually recurs: the master-thought is always that of the heart humbled before invisible justice, and only imploring His grace in order to obtain His amendment. Such a state of mind ennobles man, and introduces a sort of impassioned gravity in all the important actions of his life. We must hear the liturgy of the deathbed, of baptism, of marriage; the latter first:

'Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy state of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?'

These are genuine words of loyalty and conscience. No mystic languor, here or elsewhere. This religion is not made for women who dream, yearn, and sigh, but for men who examine themselves, act, and have confidence, confidence in some one more just than themselves. When a man is sick, and his flesh is weak, the priest comes to him, and says:

'Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness. Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God's visitation. And for what cause soever this sickness is sent unto you whether it be to try your patience for the example of others, . . . or else it be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father; know you certainly, that if you truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God's mercy, . . . submitting yourself wholly unto His will, it shall turn to your profit, and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.'

A great mysterious sentiment, a sort of sublime epic, void of images, shows darkly amid these probings of the conscience; I mean a glimpse

of the divine regulation and of the invisible world, the only existences, the only realities, in spite of bodily appearances and of the brute chance, which seems to jumble all things together. Man sees this beyond at distant intervals, and lifts himself from his mire, as though he had suddenly breathed a pure and strengthening atmosphere. Such are the effects of public prayer restored to the people; for this had been taken from the Latin and rendered into the vulgar tongue: there is a revolution in the word. Doubtless routine, here as with the ancient missal, will insensibly do its sad work: by repeating the same words, man will often do nothing but repeat words; his lips will move whilst his heart remains sluggish. But in great anguish, in the dumb agitations of a restless and hollow spirit, at the funerals of his relatives, the strong words of the book will find him in a mood to feel: for they are living,[1] and do not stay in the ears like dead language: they enter the soul; and as soon as the soul is moved and worked upon, they take root there. If you go and hear them in England itself, and if you listen to the deep and pulsating accent with which they are pronounced, you will see that they constitute there a national poem, always understood and always efficacious. On Sunday, in the silence of business and pleasure, between the bare walls of the village church, where no image, no *ex-voto*, no accessory worship, comes to distract the eyes, the seats are full; the powerful Hebraic verses knock like the strokes of a battering-ram at the door of every soul; then the liturgy unfolds its imposing supplications; and at intervals the song of the congregation, combined with the organ, comes to sustain the people's devotion. There is nothing graver and more simple than public singing; no scales, no elaborate melody: it is not calculated for the gratification of the ear, and yet it is free from the sickly sadness, from the gloomy monotony which the middle-age has left in our chanting; neither monkish nor pagan, it rolls like a manly yet sweet melody, neither contrasting with nor obscuring the words which accompany it: these words are psalms translated into verse, yet lofty; diluted, but not embellished. All is in agreement—place, music, text, ceremony—to set every man, personally and without a mediator, in presence of a just God, and to form a moral poetry which shall sustain and develop the moral sense.[2]

[1] 'To make use of words in a foreign language, merely with a sentiment of devotion, the mind taking no fruit, could be neither pleasing to God, nor beneficial to man. The party that understood not the pith or effectualness of the talk that he made with God, might be as a harp or pipe, having a sound, but not understanding the noise that itself had made; a Christian man was more than an instrument; and he had therefore provided a determinate form of supplication in the English tongue, that his subjects might be able to pray like reasonable beings in their own language.'—*Letter of Henry* VIII. *to Cranmer.* Froude, iv. 486.

[2] Bishop John Fisher's *Funeral Oration of the Countess of Richmond* (ed. 1711) shows to what practices this religion succeeded. The Countess was the mother of

One detail is still needed to complete this manly religion—human reason. The minister ascends the pulpit and speaks: he speaks coldly, I admit, with literary comments and over-long demonstrations; but solidly, seriously, like a man who desires to convince, and that by worthy means, who addresses only the reason, and discourses only of justice. With Latimer and his contemporaries, preaching, like religion, changes its object and character; like religion, it becomes popular and moral, and appropriate to those who hear it, to recall them to their duties. Few men have deserved better of their fellows, in life and word, than he. He was a genuine Englishman, conscientious, courageous, a man of common sense and good upright practice, sprung from the labouring and independent class, with whom were the heart and thews of the nation. His father, a brave yeoman, had a farm of about four pounds a year, on which he employed half a dozen men, with thirty cows which his wife milked, himself a good soldier of the king,

Henry VII., and translated the *Myrroure of Golde*, and *The Forthe Boke of the Followinge Jesus Chryst*:—

'As for fastynge, for age, and feebleness, albeit she were not bound, yet those days that by the Church were appointed, she kept them diligently and seriously, and in especial the holy Lent, throughout that she restrained her appetite till one meal of fish on the day; besides her other peculiar fasts of devotion, as St. Anthony, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Catharine, with other; and throughout all the year the Friday and Saturday she full truly observed. As to hard clothes wearing, she had her shirts and girdles of hair, which, when she was in health, every week she failed not certain days to wear, sometime the one, sometime the other, that full often her skin, as I heard say, was pierced therewith.

'In prayer, every day at her uprising, which commonly was not long after five of the clock, she began certain devotions, and so after them, with one of her gentlewomen, the matins of our Lady; which kept her to then, she came into her closet, where then with her chaplain she said also matins of the day; and after that, daily heard four or five masses upon her knees; so continuing in her prayers and devotions unto the hour of dinner, which of the eating day was ten of the clocks, and upon the fasting day eleven. After dinner full truly she would go her stations to three altars daily; daily her dirges and commendations she would say, and her even songs before supper, both of the day and of our Lady, beside many other prayers and psalters of David throughout the year; and at night before she went to bed, she failed not to resort unto her chapel, and there a large quarter of an hour to occupy her devotions. No marvel, though all this long time her kneeling was to her painful, and so painful that many times it caused in her back pain and disease. And yet nevertheless, daily, when she was in health, she failed not to say the crown of our Lady, which, after the manner of Rome, containeth sixty and three aves, and at every ave, to make a kneeling. As for meditation, she had divers books in French, wherewith she would occupy herself when she was weary of prayer. Wherefore divers she did translate out of the French into English. Her marvellous weeping they can bear witness of, which here before have heard her confession, which be divers and many, and at many seasons in the year, lightly every third day. Can also record the same those that were present at any time when she was houshylde, which was full nigh a dozen times every year, what floods of tears there issued forth of her eyes!'

keeping equipment for himself and his horse so as to join the army if need were, training his son to use the bow, making him buckle on his breastplate, and finding a few nobles at the bottom of his purse wherewith to send him to school, and thence to the university.[1] Little Latimer studied eagerly, took his degrees, and continued long a good Catholic, or, as he says, 'in darckense and in the shadow of death.' At about thirty, having often heard Bilney the martyr, and having, moreover, studied the world and thought for himself, he, as he tells us, 'began from that time forward to smell the word of God, and to forsooke the Schoole Doctours, and such fooleries;' presently to preach, and forthwith to pass for a seditious man, very troublesome to the men in authority, who were indifferent to justice. For this was in the first place the salient feature of his eloquence: he spoke to people of their duties, in exact terms. One day, when he preached before the university, the Bishop of Ely came, curious to hear him. Immediately he changed his subject, and drew the portrait of a perfect prelate, a portrait which did not tally well with the bishop's character; and he was denounced for the act. When he was made chaplain of Henry VIII., awe-inspiring as the king was, little as he was himself, he dared to write to him freely to bid him stop the persecution which was set on foot, and to prevent the interdiction of the Bible; verily he risked his life. He had done it before, he did it again; like Tyndale, Knox, all the leaders of the Reformation, he lived in almost ceaseless expectation of death, and in contemplation of the stake. Sick, liable to racking headaches, stomach-aches, pleurisy, stone, he wrought a vast work, travelling, writing, preaching, delivering at the age of sixty-seven two sermons every Sunday, and generally rising at two in the morning, winter and summer, to study. Nothing can be simpler or more effective than his eloquence; and the reason is, that he never speaks for the sake of speaking, but of doing work. His sermons, amongst others those which he preached before the young king Edward VI., are not, like those of Massillon before Louis XV., hung in the air, in the calm region of philosophical amplifications: Latimer wishes to correct and he attacks actual vices, vices which he has seen, which every one can point at with the finger; he too points them out, calls things by their name, and people too, telling facts and details, like a brave heart; and, sparing nobody, sets himself without hesitation to denounce and reform iniquity. Universal as his morality is, ancient as is his text, he applies it to the time, to his audience, at times to the judges who are there 'in velvet cotes,' who will not hear the poor, who give but a dog's hearing to such a woman in a twelvemonth, and who leave another poor woman in the Fleet, refusing to accept bail;[2] at times to the king's officers, whose

[1] See note 4, p. 38.

[2] Latimer's *Seven Sermons before Edward* VI., ed. Edward Arber, 1869. Second sermon, pp. 73 and 74.

thefts he enumerates, whom he sets between hell and restitution, and of whom he obtains, nay extorts, pound for pound, the stolen money.[1] Ever from abstract iniquity he proceeds to special abuse; for it is abuse which cries out and demands, not a discourser, but a champion. With him, theology holds but a secondary place; before all, practice: the true offence against God in his eyes is a bad deed; the true service, the suppression of bad deeds. And see by what paths he reaches this. No great word, no show of style, no exhibition of dialectics. He relates his life, the lives of others, giving dates, numbers, places; he abounds in anecdotes, little actual circumstances, fit to enter the imagination and arouse the recollections of each hearer. He is familiar, at times humorous, and always so precise, so impressed with real events and particularities of English life, that we might glean from his sermons an almost complete description of the manners of his age and country. To reprove the great, who appropriate common lands by their enclosures, he details the needs of the peasant, without the least care for conventional proprieties; he is not working now for conventionalities, but to produce convictions:—

'A plough-land must have sheep; yea, they must have sheep to dung their ground for bearing of corn; for if they have no sheep to help to fat the ground, they shall have but bare corn and thin. They must have swine for their food, to make their veneries or bacon of: their bacon is their venison, for they shall now have *hangum tuum*, if they get any other venison; so that bacon is their necessary meat to feed on, which they may not lack. They must have other cattle: as horses to draw their plough, and for carriage of things to the markets; and kine for their milk and cheese, which they must live upon and pay their rents. These cattle must have pasture, which pasture if they lack, the rest must needs fail them: and pasture they cannot have, if the land be taken in, and inclosed from them.'[2]

Another time, to put his hearers on guard against hasty judgments, he relates that, having entered the gaol at Cambridge to exhort the prisoners, he found a woman accused of having killed her infant, who would make no confession:—

'Which denying gave us occasion to search for the matter, and so we did. And at the length we found that her husband loved her not; and therefore he sought means to make her out of the way. The matter was thus: 'a child of hers had been sick by the space of a year, and so decayed as it were in a consumption. At the length it died in harvest-time. She went to her neighbours and other friends to desire their help, to prepare the child to the burial; but there was nobody at home: every man was in the field. The woman, in an heaviness and trouble of spirit, went, and being herself alone, prepared the child to the burial. Her husband coming home, not having great love towards her, accused her of the murder; and so she was taken and brought to Cambridge. But as far forth as I could learn through earnest inquisition, I thought in my conscience the woman was not guilty, all the

[1] Latimer's *Sermons*: Fifth sermon, ed. Arber, p. 147.

[2] Latimer's *Sermons*, ed. Corrie, 1844, 2 vols., *Last Sermon preached before Edward* VI., i. 249.

circumstances well considered. Immediately after this I was called to preach before the king, which was my first sermon that I made before his majesty, and it was done at Windsor; when his majesty, after the sermon was done, did most familiarly talk with me in a gallery. Now, when I saw my time, I kneeled down before his majesty, opening the whole matter; and afterwards most humbly desired his majesty to pardon that woman. For I thought in my conscience she was not guilty; else I would not for all the world sue for a murderer. The king most graciously heard my humble request, insomuch that I had a pardon ready for her at my return homeward. In the mean season that same woman was delivered of a child in the tower at Cambridge, whose godfather I was, and Mistress Cheke was godmother. But all that time I hid my pardon, and told her nothing of it, only exhorting her to confess the truth. At the length the time came when she looked to suffer: I came, as I was wont to do, to instruct her; she made great moan to me, and most earnestly required me that I would find the means that she might be purified before her suffering; for she thought she should have been damned, if she should suffer without purification. . . . So we travailed with this woman till we brought her to a good trade; and at the length shewed her the king's pardon, and let her go.

'This tale I told you by this occasion, that though some women be very unnatural, and forget their children, yet when we hear anybody so report, we should not be too hasty in believing the tale, but rather suspend our judgments till we know the truth.'[1]

When a man preaches thus, he is believed: we are sure that he is not reciting a lesson; we feel that he has seen, that he draws his moral not from books, but from facts; that his counsels come from the solid basis whence everything ought to come,—I mean from manifold and personal experience. Many a time I have listened to popular orators, who address the pocket, and prove their talent by the money they have collected: it is thus that they hold forth, with circumstantial, recent, proximate examples, with conversational turns of language, setting aside great arguments and fine language. Imagine the ascendency of the Scriptures enlarged upon in such words; to what strata of the people it could descend, what a hold it had upon sailors, workmen, domestics! Consider, again, how the authority of these words is doubled by the courage, independence, integrity, unassailable and recognised virtue of him who utters them. He spoke the truth to the king, unmasked robbers, incurred all kind of hate, resigned his see rather than sign anything against his conscience; and at eighty years, under Mary, refusing to retract, after two years of prison and waiting—and what waiting!—he was led to the stake. His companion, Ridley, slept the night before as calmly, we are told, as ever he did in his life; and when ready to be chained to the post, said aloud, 'O heavenly Father, I give Thee most hearty thanks, for that Thou hast called me to be a professor of Thee, even unto death.' Latimer in his turn, when they brought the lighted faggots, cried, 'Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in

[1] Latimer's *Sermons*, ed. Corrie, *First Sermon on the Lord's Prayer*, i. 335

England, as I trust shall never be put out.' He then bathed his hands in the flames, and resigning his soul to God, expired.

He had judged rightly: it is by this supreme proof that a creed proves its power and gains its adherents; martyrdoms are a sort of propaganda as well as a witness, and make converts whilst they make martyrs. All the writings of the time, and all the commentaries which may be added to them, are weak beside actions which, one after the other, shone forth at that time from doctors and from people, down to the most simple and ignorant. In three years, under Mary, nearly three hundred persons, men, women, old and young, some all but children, let themselves be burned alive rather than abjure. The all-powerful idea of God, and of the fidelity due to Him, made them strong against all the revulsions of nature, and all the trembling of the flesh. 'No one will be crowned,' said one of them, 'but they who fight like men; and he who endures to the end shall be saved.' Doctor Rogers suffered first, in presence of his wife and ten children, one at the breast. He had not been told beforehand, and was sleeping soundly. The wife of the keeper of Newgate woke him, and told him that he must burn that day. 'Then,' said he, 'I need not truss my points.' In the midst of the flames he did not seem to suffer. 'His children stood by consoling him, in such a way that he looked as if they were conducting him to a merry marriage.'[1] A young man of nineteen, William Hunter, apprenticed to a silk-weaver, was exhorted by his parents to persevere to the end:—

'In the mean time William's father and mother came to him, and desired heartily of God that he might continue to the end in that good way which he had begun: and his mother said to him, that she was glad that ever she was so happy to bear such a child, which could find in his heart to lose his life for Christ's name's sake.

'Then William said to his mother, "For my little pain which I shall suffer, which is but a short braid, Christ hath promised me, mother (said he), a crown of joy: may you not be glad of that, mother?" With that his mother kneeled down on her knees, saying, "I pray God strengthen thee, my son, to the end; yea, I think thee as well-bestowed as any child that ever I bare." . . .

'Then William Hunter plucked up his gown, and stepped over the parlour groundsel, and went forward cheerfully; the sheriff's servant taking him by one arm, and I his brother by another. And thus going in the way, he met with his father according to his dream, and he spake to his son weeping, and saying, "God be with thee, son William;" and William said, "God be with you, good father, and be of good comfort; for I hope we shall meet again, when we shall be merry.' His father said, "I hope so, William;" and so departed. So William went to the place where the stake stood, even according to his dream, where all things were very unready. Then William took a wet broom-faggot, and kneeled down

[1] Noailles, the French (and Catholic) Ambassador. *Pict. Hist.* ii. 523. John Fox, *History of the Acts and Monuments of the Church*, ed. Townsend, 1843, 8 vols., vi. 612, says: 'His wife and children, being eleven in number, and ten able to go, and one sucking on her breast, met him by the way as he went towards Smithfield.'—Tr.

thereon, and read the fifty-first Psalm, till he came to these words, "The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit; a contrite and a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." . . .

'Then said the sheriff, "Here is a letter from the queen. If thou wilt recant thou shalt live; if not, thou shalt be burned." "No," quoth William, "I will not recant, God willing." Then William rose and went to the stake, and stood upright to it. Then came one Richard Ponde, a bailiff, and made fast the chain about William.

'Then said master Brown, "Here is not wood enough to burn a leg of him." Then said William, "Good people! pray for me; and make speed and despatch quickly: and pray for me while you see me alive, good people! and I will pray for you likewise." "Now?" quoth master Brown, "pray for thee! I will pray no more for thee, than I will pray for a dog." . . .

'Then was there a gentleman which said, "I pray God have mercy upon his soul." The people said, "Amen, Amen."

'Immediately fire was made. Then William cast his psalter right into his brother's hand, who said, "William! think on the holy passion of Christ, and be not afraid of death." And William answered, "I am not afraid." Then lift he up his hands to heaven, and said, "Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit;" and, casting down his head again into the smothering smoke, he yielded up his life for the truth, sealing it with his blood to the praise of God.'[1]

When a passion is able thus to tame the natural affections, it is able also to tame bodily pain; all the ferocity of the time laboured in vain against convictions. Thomas Tomkins, a weaver of Shoreditch, being asked by Bonner if he could stand the fire well, bade him try it. 'Bonner took Tomkins by the fingers, and held his hand directly over the flame,' to terrify him. But 'he never shrank, till the veins shrank and the sinews burst, and the water (blood) did spirt in Mr. Harpsfield's face.'[2] 'In the isle of Guernsey, a woman with child being ordered to the fire, was delivered in the flames, and the infant being taken from her, was ordered by the magistrates to be thrown back into the fire.'[3] Bishop Hooper was burned three times over in a small fire of green wood. There was too little wood, and the wind turned aside the smoke. He cried out, 'For God's love, good people, let me have more fire.' His legs and thighs were roasted; one of his hands fell off before he expired; he endured thus three-quarters of an hour; before him in a box was his pardon, on condition that he would retract. Against long sufferings in poisonous prisons, against everything which might unnerve or seduce, these men were invincible: five died of hunger at Canterbury; they were in irons night and day, with no covering but their clothes, on rotten straw; yet there was an understanding amongst them, that the 'cross of persecution' was a blessing from God, 'an inestimable jewel, a sovereign antidote, well-approved, to cure love of self and earthly affection.' Before such examples the people were shaken. A woman wrote to Bishop Bonner, that there was not a child but called him

[1] Fox, *History of the Acts*, etc., vi. 727. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 719.
[3] Neal *History of the Puritans*, ed. Toulmin, 5 vols., 1793, i. 96.

Bonner the hangman, and knew on his fingers, as well as he knew his Pater, the exact number of those he had burned at the stake, or suffered to die of hunger in prison these nine months. 'You have lost the hearts of twenty thousand persons who were inveterate Papists a year ago.' The spectators encouraged the martyrs, and cried out to them that their cause was just. The Catholic envoy Renard wrote to Charles v. that it was said that several had desired to take their place at the stake, by the side of those who were being burned. In vain the queen had forbidden, on pain of death, all marks of approbation. 'We know that they are men of God,' cried one of the spectators; 'that is why we cannot help saying, God strengthen them' And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen.' What wonder if, at the coming of Elizabeth, England cast in her lot with Protestantism? The threats of the Armada urged her further in advance; and the Reformation became national under the pressure of foreign hostility, as it had become popular through the triumph of its martyrs.

IV.

Two distinct branches receive the common sap,—one above, the other beneath: one respected, flourishing, shooting forth in the open air; the other despised, half buried in the ground, trodden under foot by those who would crush it: both living, the Anglican as well as the Puritan, the one in spite of the effort made to destroy it, the other in spite of the care taken to develop it.

The court has its religion, like the country—a sincere and winning religion. Amid the pagan poesies which up to the Revolution always had the ear of the world, we find gradually piercing through and rising higher the grave and grand idea which sent its roots to the depth of the public mind. Many poets, Drayton, Davies, Cowley, Giles Fletcher, Quarles, Crashaw, wrote sacred histories, pious or moral verses, noble stanzas on death and the immortality of the soul, on the frailty of things human, and on the supreme providence in which alone man finds the support of his weakness and the consolation of his sufferings. In the greatest prose writers, Bacon, Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Raleigh, we see the fruits of veneration, a settled belief in the obscure beyond; in short, faith and prayer. Several prayers written by Bacon are amongst the finest known; and the courtier Raleigh, whilst writing of the fall of empires, and how the barbarous nations had destroyed this grand and magnificent Roman Empire, ended his book with the ideas and tone of a Bossuet.[1] Picture Saint Paul's in London, and the

[1] 'O eloquent, just, and mightie Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawne together all the farre stretched greatnesse, all the pride, crueltie, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*'

fashionable people who used to meet there; the gentlemen who noisily made the rowels of their spurs resound on entering, looked around and carried on conversation during service, who swore by God's eyes, God's eyelids, who amongst the columns and chapels showed off their beribboned shoes, their chains, scarves, satin doublets, velvet cloaks, their braggadocio manners and stage attitudes. All this was very free, very loose, very far from our modern decency. But pass over youthful bluster; take man in his great moments, in prison, in danger, or indeed when old age arrives, when he has come to judge of life; take him, above all, in the country, on his estate far from any town, in the church of the village where he is lord; or again, when he is alone in the evening, at his table, listening to the prayer offered up by his chaplain, having no books but some great folio of dramas, well dog's-eared by his pages, and his Prayer-book and Bible; you may then understand how the new religion tightens its hold on these imaginative and serious minds. It does not shock them by a narrow rigour; it does not fetter the flight of their mind; it does not attempt to extinguish the buoyant flame of their fancy; it does not proscribe the beautiful: it preserves more than any reformed church the noble pomp of the ancient worship, and rolls under the domes of its cathedrals, the rich modulations, the majestic harmonies of its grave, organ-led music. It is its characteristic not to be in opposition to the world, but, on the other hand, to draw it nearer to itself, by bringing itself nearer to it. By its secular condition as well as by its external worship, it is embraced by and it embraces it: its head is the Queen, it is a part of the Constitution, it sends its dignitaries to the House of Lords; it suffers its priests to marry; its benefices are in the nomination of the great families; its chief members are the younger sons of these same families: by all these channels it imbibes the spirit of the age. In its hands, too, reformation cannot become hostile to science, poetry, the large ideas of the Renaissance. Nay, in the nobles of Elizabeth and James I., as in the cavaliers of Charles I., it tolerates artistic tastes, philosophical curiosity, the fashions of society, and the sentiment of the beautiful. The alliance is so strong, that, under Cromwell, the ecclesiastics in a mass were dismissed for their king's sake, and the cavaliers died wholesale for the Church. The two societies mutually touch and are confounded together. If several poets are pious, several ecclesiastics are poetical,—Bishop Hall, Bishop Corbet, Wither a rector, and the preacher Donne. If several laymen rise to religious contemplations, several theologians, Hooker, John Hales, Taylor, Chillingworth, set philosophy and reason by the side of dogma. Accordingly we find a new literature arising, elevated and original, eloquent and measured, armed at once against the Puritans, who sacrifice freedom of intellect to the tyranny of the letter, and against the Catholics, who sacrifice independence of criticism to the tyranny of tradition; opposed equally to the servility of literal interpretation and the servility of a prescribed interpretation. In front of all appears

the learned and excellent Hooker, one of the sweetest and most conciliatory of men, the most solid and persuasive of logicians, a comprehensive mind, who in every question remote from the principles[1] introduces into controversy general conceptions, and the knowledge of human nature;[2] beyond this, a methodical writer, correct and always ample, worthy of being regarded not only as one of the fathers of the English Church, but as one of the founders of English prose. With a sustained gravity and simplicity, he shows the Puritans that the laws of nature, reason, and society, like the law of Scripture, are of divine institution, that all are equally worthy of respect and obedience, that we must not sacrifice the inner word, by which God reaches our intellect, to the outer word, by which God reaches our senses; that thus the civil constitution of the Church, and the visible ordinance of ceremonies, may be conformable to the will of God, even when they are not justified by a clear text of Scripture; and that the authority of the magistrates, as well as the reason of man, does not exceed its rights in establishing certain uniformities and disciplines on which Scripture is silent, in order that reason may decide:—

[1] Hooker's Works, ed. Keble, 1836, 3 vols., *The Ecclesiastical Polity.*

[2] *Ibid.* i. book i. 249, 258, 312:—

'That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the form and measure, of working, the same we term a Law. . . .

'Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether though it were but for awhile, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, . . . if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself: . . . what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve! See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world? . . .

'Between men and beasts there is no possibility of sociable communion, because the well-spring of that communion is a natural delight which man hath to transfuse from himself into others, and to receive from others into himself especially those things wherein the excellency of his kind doth most consist. The chiefest instrument of human communion therefore is speech, because thereby we impart mutually one to another the conceits of our reasonable understanding. And for that cause seeing beasts are not hereof capable, forasmuch as with them we can use no such conference, they being in degree, although above other creatures on earth to whom nature hath denied sense, yet lower than to be sociable companions of man to whom nature hath given reason; it is of Adam said, that amongst the beasts "he found not for himself any meet companion." Civil society doth more content the nature of man than any private kind of solitary living, because in society this good of mutual participation is so much larger than otherwise. Herewith notwithstanding we are not satisfied, but we covet (if it might be) to have a kind of society and fellowship even with all mankind.'

'For if the natural strength of man's wit may by experience and study attain unto such ripeness in the knowledge of things human, that men in this respect may presume to build somewhat upon their judgment; what reason have we to think but that even in matters divine, the like wits furnished with necessary helps, exercised in Scripture with like diligence, and assisted with the grace of Almighty God, may grow unto so much perfection of knowledge, that men shall have just cause, when anything pertinent unto faith and religion is doubted of, the more willingly to incline their minds towards that which the sentence of so grave, wise, and learned in that faculty shall judge most sound.'[1]

This 'natural light' therefore must not be despised, but rather nourished so as to augment the other,[2] as we put torch to torch; above all, nourished that we may live in harmony with each other.

'Far more comfort it were for us (so small is the joy we take in these strifes) to labour under the same yoke, as men that look for the same eternal reward of their labours, to be conjoined with you in bands of indissoluble love and amity, to live as if our persons being many, our souls were but one, rather than in such dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions.'

In fact, it is in such amity that the greatest theologians conclude: they quit an oppressive practice to grasp a liberal spirit. If by its political structure the English Church is persecuting, by its doctrinal structure it is tolerant; it needs the reason of the laity too much to refuse it liberty; it lives in a world too cultivated and thoughtful to proscribe thought and culture. John Hales, its most eminent doctor, declared several times that he would renounce the Church of England to-morrow, if she insisted on the doctrine that other Christians would be damned; and that men believe other people to be damned only when they desire them to be so.[3] It was he again, a theologian, a prebendary, who advises men to trust to themselves alone in religious matters; to leave nothing for authority, or antiquity, or the majority; to use their own reason in believing, as they use 'their own legs in walking;' to act and be men in mind as well as in the rest; and to regard as cowardly and impious the borrowing of doctrine and sloth of thought. So Chillingworth, a notably militant and loyal mind, the most exact, the most penetrating, and the most convincing of controversialists, first Protestant, then Catholic, then Protestant again and for ever, has the courage to say that these great changes, wrought in himself and by himself, through study and research, are, of all his actions, those which satisfy him most. He maintains that reason applied to Scripture alone ought to persuade men; that authority has no claim in it; 'that

[1] *Ecc. Pol.* i. book ii. ch. vii. 4, p. 405.

[2] See the *Dialogues of Galileo*. The same idea which is persecuted by the church at Rome is at the same time defended by the church in England. See also *Ecc. Pol.* i. book iii. 461–481.

[3] Clarendon's witness. See the same doctrines in Jeremy Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 1647.

nothing is more against religion than to force religion;' that the great principle of the Reformation is liberty of conscience; and that if the doctrines of the different Protestant sects are not absolutely true, at least they are free from all impiety and from all error damnable in itself, or destructive of salvation. Thus is developed a new school of polemics, a theology, a solid and rational apologetics, rigorous in its arguments, capable of expansion, confirmed by science, and which, authorizing independence of personal judgment at the same time with the intervention of the natural reason, leaves religion in amity with the world and the establishments of the past.

A writer of genius appears amongst these, a prose-poet, gifted with imagination like Spenser and Shakspeare,—Jeremy Taylor, who, from the bent of his mind as well as from circumstances, was destined to present the alliance of the Renaissance with the Reformation, and to carry into the pulpit the ornate style of the court. A preacher at St. Paul's, appreciated and admired by men of fashion 'for his youthful and fresh beauty and his graceful bearing,' as also for his splendid diction; patronised and promoted by Archbishop Laud, he wrote for the king a defence of episcopacy; became chaplain to the king's army; was taken, ruined, twice imprisoned by the Parliamentarians; married a natural daughter of Charles I.; then, after the Restoration, was loaded with honours; became bishop, member of the Privy Council, and chancellor of the Irish university: in every passage of his life, fortunate or otherwise, private or public, we see that he is an Anglican, a royalist, imbued with the spirit of the cavaliers and courtiers, not with their vices. On the contrary, there was never a better or more upright man, more zealous in his duties, more tolerant by principle; so that, preserving a Christian gravity and purity, he received from the Renaissance only its rich imagination, its classical erudition, and its liberal spirit. But he had these gifts entire, as they existed in the most brilliant and original of the men of the world, in Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, with the graces, splendours, refinements which are characteristic of these sensitive and creative geniuses, and yet with the redundancies, singularities, incongruities inevitable in an age when excess of transport prevented the soundness of taste. Like all these writers, like Montaigne, he was imbued with the classic antiquity; in the pulpit he quotes Greek and Latin anecdotes, passages from Seneca, verses of Lucretius and Euripides, and this side by side with texts from the Bible, from the Gospels and the Fathers. Cant was not yet in vogue; the two great sources of teaching, Christian and Pagan, ran side by side; they were collected in the same vessel, without imagining that the wisdom of reason and nature could mar the wisdom of faith and revelation. Fancy these strange sermons, in which the two eruditions, Hellenic and Evangelic, flow together with their texts, and each text in its own language; in which, to prove that fathers are often unfortunate in their children, the author brings forward one after the other,

Chabrias, Germanicus, Marcus Aurelius, Hortensius, Quintus Fabius Maximus, Scipio Africanus, Moses and Samuel; where in the form of comparisons and illustrations is heaped up the spoil of histories and authorities on botany, astronomy, zoology, which the cyclopædias and scientific fancies at that time spread before the mind. Taylor will relate to you the history of the bears of Pannonia, which, when wounded, will press the iron deeper home; or of the apples of Sodom, which are beautiful to the gaze, but full within of rottenness and worms; and many others of the same kind. For it was a characteristic of men of this age and school, not to possess a mind swept, levelled, regulated, laid out in straight paths, like our seventeenth century writers, and like the gardens at Versailles, but full, and crowded with circumstantial facts, complete dramatic scenes, little coloured pictures, pell-mell and badly dusted; so that, lost in confusion and dust, the modern spectator cries out at their pedantry and coarseness. Metaphors multiply one above the other, jumbled, blocking each other's path, as in Shakspeare. We think to follow one, and a second begins, then a third cutting into the second, and so on, flower after flower, firework after firework, so that the brightness becomes misty with sparks, and the sight ends in a haze. On the other hand, and just by virtue of this same turn of mind, Taylor imagines objects, not vaguely and feebly, by some indistinct general conception, but precisely, entire, as they are, with their sensible colour, their proper form, the multitude of true and particular details which distinguish them in their species. He is not acquainted with them by hearsay; he has seen them. Better, he sees them now, and makes them to be seen. Read this piece, and say if it does not seem to have been copied from a hospital, or from the field of battle:—

'And what can we complain of the weakness of our strengths, or the pressures of diseases, when we see a poor soldier stand in a breach almost starved with cold and hunger, and his cold apt to be relieved only by the heats of anger, a fever, or a fired musket, and his hunger slacked by a greater pain and a huge fear? This man shall stand in his arms and wounds, *patiens luminis atque solis*, pale and faint, weary and watchful; and at night shall have a bullet pulled out of his flesh, and shivers from his bones, and endure his mouth to be sewed up from a violent rent to its own dimensions; and all this for a man whom he never saw, or, if he did, was not noted by him; but one that shall condemn him to the gallows if he runs away from all this misery.'[1]

This is the advantage of a full imagination over ordinary reason. It produces in a mass twenty or thirty ideas, and as many images, exhausting the subject which the other only outlines and sketches. There are a thousand circumstances and shades in every event; and they are all grasped in living words like these:—

'For so have I seen the little purls of a spring sweat through the bottom of a

[1] Jeremy Taylor's Works, ed. Eden, 1840, 10 vols., *Holy Dying*, ch. iii. sec 1, § 3, p. 315.

bank, and intenerate the stubborn pavement, till it hath made it fit for the impression of a child's foot; and it was despised, like the descending pearls of a misty morning, till it had opened its way and made a stream large enough to carry away the ruins of the undermined strand, and to invade the neighbouring gardens; but then the despised drops were grown into an artificial river, and an intolerable mischief. So are the first entrances of sin, stopped with the antidotes of a hearty prayer, and checked into sobriety by the eye of a reverend man, or the counsels of a single sermon; but when such beginnings are neglected, and our religion hath not in it so much philosophy as to think anything evil as long as we can endure it, they grow up to ulcers and pestilential evils; they destroy the soul by their abode, who at their first entry might have been killed with the pressure of a little finger.'[1]

All extremes meet in that imagination. The cavaliers who heard him, found, as in Ford, Beaumont, and Fletcher, the crude copy of the most coarse and unclean truth, and the light music of the most graceful and airy fancies; the smell and horrors of a dissecting room,[2] and all on a sudden the freshness and cheerfulness of a smiling dawn; the hateful detail of a leprosy, its white spots, its inner rottenness; and then this lovely picture of a lark, rising amid the early perfumes of the fields:—

'For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the vibration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man.'[3]

And he continues with the charm, sometimes with the very words, of Shakspeare. In the preacher, as well as in the poet, as well as in all the cavaliers and all the artists of the time, the imagination is so full, that it reaches the real, even to its filth, and the ideal as far as its heaven.

How could true religious sentiment thus accommodate itself to such a frank and worldly gait? This, however, is what it has done; and more—the latter has generated the former. With Taylor, as well as with the others, a free poetry leads to profound faith. If this alliance astonishes us to-day, it is because in this respect people have grown pedantic. We take the precise man for a religious man. We are content to see him stiff in his black coat, choked in a white cravat, with a prayer-book in his hand. We confound piety with decency, propriety, permanent and perfect regularity. We proscribe to a man of faith all candid speech, all bold gesture, all fire and dash in word or act; we are shocked by Luther's rude words, the bursts of laughter which shook his mighty

[1] Sermon xvi., *Of Growth in Sin.*

[2] 'We have already opened up this dunghill covered with snow which was indeed on the outside white as the spots of leprosy.'

[3] *Golden Grove Sermons*: V. 'The Return of Prayers.'

paunch, his workaday rages, his plain and free speaking, the audacious familiarity with which he treats Christ and the Deity.[1] We do not remember that these freedoms and this recklessness are simply signs of entire belief, that warm and immoderate conviction is too sure of itself to be tied down to an irreproachable style, that primitive religion consists not of punctilios, but of emotions. It is a poem, the greatest of all, a poem believed in; this is why these men found it on the borders of their poesy: the way of looking at the world, adopted by Shakspeare and all the tragic poets, led to it; another step, and Jacques, Hamlet, would be there. That vast obscurity, that black unexplored ocean, 'the unknown country,' which they saw on the verge of our sad life, who knows whether it is not bounded by another shore? The troubled notion of the shadowy beyond is national, and this is why the national renaissance at this time became Christian. When Taylor speaks of death, he only takes up and works out a thought which Shakspeare had already sketched:—

'All the succession of time, all the changes in nature, all the varieties of light and darkness, the thousand thousands of accidents in the world, and every contingency to every man, and to every creature, doth preach our funeral sermon, and calls us to look and see how the old sexton Time throws up the earth, and digs a grave where we must lay our sins or our sorrows, and sow our bodies, till they rise again in a fair or in an intolerable eternity.'

For beside this final death, which swallows us whole, there are partial deaths which devour us piece by piece:—

'Every revolution which the sun makes about the world, divides between life and death; and death possesses both those portions by the next morrow; and we are dead to all those months which we have already lived, and we shall never live them over again: and still God makes little periods of our age. First we change our world, when we come from the womb to feel the warmth of the sun. Then we sleep and enter into the image of death, in which state we are unconcerned in all the changes of the world: and if our mothers or our nurses die, or a wild boar destroy our vineyards, or our king be sick, we regard it not, but during that state are as disinterest as if our eyes were closed with the clay that weeps in the bowels of the earth. At the end of seven years our teeth fall and die before us, representing a formal prologue to the tragedy; and still every seven years it is odds but we shall finish the last scene: and when nature, or chance, or vice, takes our body in pieces, weakening some parts and loosing others, we taste the grave and the solemnities of our own funerals, first in those parts that ministered to vice, and next in them that served for ornament, and in a short time even they that served for necessity become useless, and entangled like the wheels of a broken clock. Baldness is but a dressing to our funerals, the proper ornament of mourning, and of a person entered very far into the regions and possession of death: and we have

[1] Luther's *Table Talk*, ed. Hazlitt, No. 187, p. 30: When Jesus Christ was born, he doubtless cried and wept like other children, and his mother tended him as other mothers tend their children. As he grew up he was submissive to his parents, and waited on them, and carried his supposed father's dinner to him; and when he came back, Mary no doubt often said, 'My dear little Jesus, where hast thou been?'

many more of the same signification; gray hairs, rotten teeth, dim eyes, trembling joints, short breath, stiff limbs, wrinkled skin, short memory, decayed appetite. Every day's necessity calls for a reparation of that portion which death fed on all night, when we lay in his lap, and slept in his outer chambers. The very spirits of a man prey upon the daily portion of bread and flesh, and every meal is a rescue from one death, and lays up for another; and while we think a thought, we die; and the clock strikes, and reckons on our portion of eternity: we form our words with the breath of our nostrils, we have the less to live upon for every word we speak.'[1]

Beyond all these destructions, other destructions are at work; chance mows us down as well as nature, and we are the prey of accident as of necessity:—

'Thus nature calls us to meditate of death by those things which are the instruments of acting it: and God by all the variety of His providence makes us see death everywhere, in all variety of circumstances, and dressed up for all the fancies, and the expectation of every single person.[2] . . . And how many teeming mothers have rejoiced over their swelling wombs, and pleased themselves in becoming the channels of blessing to a family, and the midwife hath quickly bound their heads and feet, and carried them forth to burial?[3] . . . You can go no whither but you tread upon a dead man's bones.'[4]

Thus these powerful words roll on, sublime as an organ motett: this universal crushing out of human vanities has the funeral grandeur of a tragedy; piety in this instance proceeds from eloquence, and genius leads to faith. All the powers and all the tenderness of the soul are moved. It is not a cold rigorist who speaks; it is a man, a moved man, with senses and a heart, who has become a Christian not by mortification, but by the development of his whole being:—

'Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth, and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five-and-twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman, the heritage of worms and serpents, rottenness and cold dishonour, and our beauty so changed, that our acquaintance quickly knew us not; and that change mingled with so much horror, or else meets so with our fears and weak discoursings, that they who six hours ago tended upon us either with charitable or ambitious services, cannot without some regret stay in the room alone where the body lies stripped of its life and honour. I have read of a fair young German gentleman who living often refused to be pictured, but put off the importunity of his friends' desire by giving way that after a few days' burial they might send a

[1] *Holy Dying*, ed. Eden, ch. i. sec. i. p. 267.
[2] *Ibid.* 267. [3] *Ibid.* 268. [4] *Ibid* 269.

painter to his vault, and if they saw cause for it draw the image of his death unto the life: they did so, and found his face half eaten, and his midriff and backbone full of serpents; and so he stands pictured among his armed ancestors. So does the fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you as me; and then what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave? what friends to visit us? what officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funeral?'[1]

Brought hither, like Hamlet to the burying-ground, amid the skulls which he recognises, and under the oppression of the death which he touches, man needs but a slight effort to see a new world arise in his heart. He seeks the remedy of his sadness in the idea of eternal justice, and implores it with a breadth of words which makes the prayer a hymn in prose, as beautiful as a work of art:—

'Eternal God, Almighty Father of men and angels, by whose care and providence I am preserved and blessed, comforted and assisted, I humbly beg of Thee to pardon the sins and follies of this day, the weakness of my services, and the strengths of my passions, the rashness of my words, and the vanity and evil of my actions. O just and dear God, how long shall I confess my sins, and pray against them, and yet fall under them? O let it be so no more; let me never return to the follies of which I am ashamed, which bring sorrow and death, and Thy displeasure, worse than death. Give me a command over my inclinations and a perfect hatred of sin, and a love to Thee above all the desires of this world. Be pleased to bless and preserve me this night from all sin and all violence of chance, and the malice of the spirits of darkness: watch over me in my sleep; and whether I sleep or wake, let me be Thy servant. Be Thou first and last in all my thoughts, and the guide and continual assistance of all my actions. Preserve my body, pardon the sin of my soul, and sanctify my spirit. Let me always live holily and soberly; and when I die, receive my soul into Thy hands.'[2]

V.

This was, however, but an imperfect Reformation, and the official religion was too closely bound up with the world to undertake to cleanse it thoroughly: if it repressed the excesses of vice, it did not attack its source; and the paganism of the Renaissance, following its bent, already under James I. issued in the corruption, orgie, mincing, and drunken habits, appetising and gross sensuality,[3] which subsequently under the Restoration stank like a sewer in the sun. But underneath the established Protestantism was propagated the interdicted Protestantism: the yeomen were settling their faith like the gentlemen, and already the Puritans made headway under the Anglicans.

[1] *Holy Dying*, ch. i. sec. ii. p. 270. [2] *The Golden Grove.*

[3] See in *Thierry and Theodoret*, by Beaumont and Fletcher, the characters of Bawder, Protalyce, and Brunhalt. In *The Custom of the Country*, by the same authors, several scenes represent the inside of an infamous house,—a frequent thing, by the way, in the dramas of that time; but here the boarders in the house are men. See also *Rule a Wife and have a Wife*, by the same authors.

No culture here, no philosophy, no sentiment of harmonious and pagan beauty. Conscience only spoke, and its restlessness had become a terror. The son of the shopkeeper, of the farmer, who read the Bible in the barn or the counting-house, amid the barrels or the wool-bags, did not take matters as the fine cavalier bred up in the old mythology, and refined by an elegant Italian education. They took them tragically, sternly examined themselves, pricked their hearts with their scruples, filled their imaginations with the vengeance of God and the terrors of the Bible. A gloomy epic, terrible and grand as the *Edda*, was fermenting in their melancholy imaginations. They steeped themselves in texts of Saint Paul, in the thundering menaces of the prophets; they burdened their minds with the pitiless doctrines of Calvin; they admitted that the majority of men were predestined to eternal damnation:[1] many believed that this multitude were criminal before their birth; that God willed, foresaw, provided for their ruin; that He designed their punishment from all eternity; that He created them simply to give them up to it.[2] Nothing but grace can save the wretched creature, free grace, God's sheer favour, which He only gives to a few, and which He grants not to the struggles and works of men, but after the arbitrary choice of His single and absolute will. We are 'children of wrath,' plague-stricken, and condemned from our birth; and wherever we look in all the expanse of heaven, we find but thunderbolts to deafen and destroy us. Fancy, if you can, the effects of such an idea on the solitary and morose spirits, such as this race and climate generates. Some would fancy themselves damned, and went groaning about the streets; others never slept. They were beside themselves, always imagining that they felt the hand of God or the claw of the devil upon them. An extraordinary power, immense means of action, were suddenly opened up in the soul, and there was no barrier in the moral life, and no establishment in civil society which their efforts could not upset.

At once, private life was transformed. How should ordinary sentiments, natural and every-day notions of happiness and pleasure, subsist before such a conception? Suppose men condemned to death, not ordinary death, but the rack, torture, an infinitely horrible and infinitely extended torment, waiting for their sentence, and yet knowing that they had one chance in a thousand, in a hundred thousand, of pardon; could they still go on amusing themselves, taking an interest in the business or pleasure of the time? The azure heaven shines not for them, the sun warms them not, the beauty and sweetness of things have no attraction for them; they have lost the wont of laughter; they fasten inwardly, pale and silent, on their anguish and their expectation; they have but one thought: 'Will the judge pardon me?' They anxiously

[1] Calvin quoted by Haag, ii. 216, *Histoire des Dogmes Chrétiens*.

[2] These were the Supralapsarians.

probe the involuntary motions of their heart, which alone can reply, and the inner revelation, which alone can render them certain of pardon or ruin. They think that any other condition of mind is unholy, that recklessness and joy are monstrous, that every worldly distraction or interest is an act of godlessness, and that the true mark of a Christian is a terror at the very idea of salvation. Thenceforth rigour and rigidity mark their manners. The Puritan condemns the stage, the assemblies, the world's pomps and gatherings, the court's gallantry and elegance, the poetical and symbolical festivals of the country, the May-days, the merry feasts, bell-ringings, all the outlets by which sensual or instinctive nature had essayed to relieve itself. He gives them up, abandons recreations and ornaments, crops his hair, wears a simple sombre-hued coat, speaks through his nose, walks stiffly, with his eyes in the air, absorbed, indifferent to visible things. The external and natural man is abolished; only the inner and spiritual man survives; there remains of the soul only the ideas of God and conscience,—a conscience alarmed and diseased, but strict in every duty, attentive to the least requirements, disdaining the equivocations of worldly morality, inexhaustible in patience, courage, sacrifice, enthroning purity on the domestic hearth, truth in the tribunal, probity in the counting-house, labour in the workshop, above all, a fixed determination to bear all and do all rather than fail in the least injunction of moral justice and Bible-law. The stoical energy, a fundamental honesty of the race, were aroused at the appeal of an enthusiastic imagination; and these unbending characteristics were displayed in their entirety in conjunction with abnegation and virtue.

Another step, and this great movement passed from within to without, from individual manners to public institutions. Observe these people in their reading of the Bible, they apply to themselves the commands imposed on the Jews, and the prologues urge them to it. At the outset of their Bibles the translator[1] set a table of the principal words in Scripture, each with its definition and texts to support it. They read and weigh these words: '*Abomination* before God are Idoles, Images. Before whom the people do bow them selfes.' Is this precept observed? No doubt the images are taken away, but the queen has still a crucifix in her chapel, and is it not a remnant of idolatry to kneel down before the sacrament? '*Abrogacion*, that is to abolyshe, or to make of none effecte: And so the lawe of the commandementes whiche was in the decrees and ceremonies, is abolished. The sacrifices, festes, meates, and al outwarde ceremonies are abrogated, and all the order of priesthode is abrogated.' Is this so, and how does it happen that the bishops still take upon themselves the right of prescribing faith, worship, and of tyrannising over Christian consciences? And have they not pre-

[1] *The Byble, nowe lately with greate industry and Diligẽce recognized* (by Edm. Becke), Lond., by John Daye and William Seres, 1549, with Tyndale's *Prologues*.

served in the organ-music, in the surplice of the priests, in the sign of the cross, in a hundred other practices, all these visible rites which God has declared profane? '*Abuses.* The abuses that be in the church ought to be corrected by the prynces. The ministers ought to preache against abuses. Any maner of mere tradicions of man are abuses.'

What, meanwhile, is their prince doing, and why does he leave abuses in the church? The Christian must rise and protest; we must purge the church from the pagan crust with which tradition has covered it.[1] Such are the ideas conceived by these uncultivated minds. Fancy the simple folk, more capable by their simplicity of a sturdy faith, these freeholders, these big traders, who have sat on juries, voted at elections, deliberated, discussed in common private and public business, used to examine the law, the adducing of precedents, all the detail of juridical and legal procedure; bringing their lawyer's and pleader's training to bear upon the interpretation of Scripture, who, having once formed a conviction, employ for it the cold passion, the intractable obstinacy, the heroic sternness of the English character. Their precise and combative minds take the business in hand. Every one holds himself bound to be ready, strong, and well prepared to answer all such as shall demand a reason of his faith. Each one has his difficulty and conscientious scruple[2] about some portion of the liturgy or the official hierarchy; about the dignities of canons and archdeacons, or certain passages of the funeral service; about the sacramental bread or the reading of the apocryphal books in church; about plurality of benefices or the ecclesiastical square cap. They each oppose some point, all together the episcopacy and the retention of Romish ceremonies.[3] Then they are imprisoned, fined, pilloried; they have their ears cut off; their ministers are dismissed, hunted out, prosecuted.[4] The law declares that any one above the age of sixteen who for the space of a month shall refuse to attend the established worship, shall be imprisoned until such time as he shall submit; and if he does not submit at the end of three months, he shall be banished the kingdom; and if he returns, put to death. They submit, and show as much firmness in suffering as scruple in belief; for a tittle, on the reception of the communion sitting rather than kneeling, or standing rather than sitting, they give up their

[1] Examination of Mr Axton: 'I can't consent to wear the surplice, it is against my conscience; I trust, by the help of God, I shall never put on that sleeve, which is a mark of the beast.'—Examination of Mr White, 'a substantial citizen of London' (1572), accused of not going to the parish church: 'The whole Scriptures are for destroying idolatry, and everything that belongs to it.'—'Where is the place where these are forbidden?'—'In Deuteronomy and other places; . . . and God by Isaiah commandeth not to pollute ourselves with the garments of the image.'

[2] One expression continually occurs: 'Tenderness of conscience'—'a squeamish stomach'—'our weaker brethren.'

[3] The separation of the Anglicans and dissenters may be dated from 1564.

[4] 1593.

livings, their property, their liberty, their country. One Dr. Leighton was imprisoned fifteen weeks in a dog's kennel, without fire, roof, bed, and in irons: his hair and skin fell off; he was set in the pillory during the November frosts, then whipt, and branded on the forehead; his ears were cut off, his nose slit; he was shut up eight years in the Fleet, and thence cast into the common prison. Many went cheerfully to the stake. Religion with them was a covenant, that is, a treaty made with God, which must be kept before all, as a written engagement, to the letter, to the last syllable. An admirable and deplorable stiffness of an over-scrupulous conscience, which made cavillers at the same time with believers, which was to make tyrants after it had made martyrs.

Between the two, it made fighting men. They became wonderfully enriched and increased in the course of eighty years, as is always the case with men who labour, live honestly, and pass their lives uprightly, sustained by a powerful source of action from within. Thenceforth they are able to resist, and they do resist when driven to extremities; they choose to have recourse to arms rather than be driven back to idolatry and sin. The Long Parliament assembles, defeats the king, purges religion; the dam is broken, the Independents are hurled above the Presbyterians, the fanatics above the merely fervid; irresistible and overwhelming faith, enthusiasm, grow into a torrent, swallow up, or at least disturb the strongest minds, politicians, lawyers, captains. The Commons occupy a day in every week in deliberating on the progress of religion. As soon as they touch upon doctrines they become furious. A poor man, Paul Best, being accused of denying the Trinity, they demand the passing of a decree to punish him with death; James Nayler having imagined that he was God, the Commons devote themselves to a trial of eleven days, with a Hebraic animosity and ferocity: 'I think him worse than possessed with the devil. Our God is here supplanted. My ears trembled, my heart shuddered, on hearing this report. I will speak no more. Let us all stop our ears and stone him.'[1] Before the House, publicly, the men in authority had ecstasies. After the expulsion of the Presbyterians the preacher Hugh Peters started up in the middle of a sermon, and cried out: 'Now I have it by Revelation, now I shall tell you. This army must root up Monarchy, not only here, but in France and other kingdoms round about; this is to bring you out of Egypt: this Army is that corner-stone cut out of the Mountaine, which must dash the powers of the earth to pieces. But it is objected, the way we walk in is without president (*sic*); what think you of the Virgin Mary? was there ever my president before, that a Woman should conceive a Child without the company of a Man? This is an Age to make examples and presidents in.'[2] Cromwell found prophecies, counsels in the Bible for the present time, positive justifications of his policy. 'He

[1] Burton's *Parliamentary Diary*, ed. by Rutt, 1828, 4 vols., i. 54.

[2] Walker's *History of Independency*, 1648, part ii. p. 49.

looked upon the Design of the Lord in this day to be the freeing of His People from every Burden, and that was now accomplishing what was prophesied in the 110th Psalm; from the Consideration of which he was often encouraged to attend the effecting those Ends, spending at least an hour in the Exposition of that Psalm.'[1] Granted that he was a schemer, ambitious before everything, yet he was truly fanatical and sincere. His doctor related that he had been very melancholy for years at a time, with strange hallucinations, and the frequent fancy that he was at death's door. Two years before the Revolution he wrote to his cousin: 'Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put himself forth in the cause of his God than I. . . . The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light,—and give us to walk in the light, as He is the light! . . . blessed be His Name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine!'[2] Certainly he must have dreamed of becoming a saint as well as a king, and aspired to salvation as well as to a throne. At the moment when he was proceeding to Ireland, and was about to massacre the Catholics there, he wrote to his daughter-in-law a letter of advice which Baxter or Taylor might willingly have subscribed. In the midst of pressing affairs, in 1651, he thus exhorted his wife: 'My dearest, I could not satisfy myself to omit this post, although I have not much to write. . . . It joys me to hear thy soul prospereth: the Lord increase His favours to thee more and more. The great good thy soul can wish is, That the Lord lift upon thee the light of His countenance, which is better than life. The Lord bless all thy good counsel and example to all those about thee, and hear all thy prayers, and accept thee always.'[3] Dying, he asked whether grace once received could be lost, and was reassured to learn that it could not, being, as he said, certain that he had once been in a state of grace. He died with this prayer: 'Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in Covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will, come to Thee, for Thy People.

[1] This passage may serve as an example of the difficulties and perplexities to which a translator of any History of Literature must always be exposed, and this without any fault of the original author. *Ab uno disce omnes.* M. Taine says that Cromwell found justification for his policy in Psalm cxiii., which, on looking out, I found to be 'an exhortation to praise God for His excellency and for His mercy,'—a psalm by which Cromwell's conduct could nowise be justified. I opened then Carlyle's *Cromwell's Letters*, etc., and found, in vol. ii. part vi. p. 157, the same fact stated, but Psalm cx. mentioned and given,—a far more likely psalm to have influenced Cromwell. Carlyle refers to *Ludlow*, i. 319, Taine to Guizot, *Portraits Politiques*, p. 63, and to Carlyle. In looking in Guizot's volume, 5th ed., 1862, I find that this writer also mentions Psalm cxiii.; but on referring finally to the *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, printed at Vivay (*sic*) in the Canton of Bern, 1698, I found, in vol. i. p. 319, the sentence, as given above; therefore Carlyle was in the right.—TR.

[2] *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* ed. Carlyle, 1866, 3 vols., i. 79.

[3] *Idem*, ii. 273.

Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service. . . . Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them . . . and go on . . . with the work of reformation; and make the Name of Christ glorious in the world.'[1] Underneath this practical, prudent, worldly spirit, there was an English element of anxious and powerful imagination,[2] capable of engendering an impassioned Calvinism and mystic fears. The same contrasts were jumbled together and reconciled in the other Independents. In 1648, after unsuccessful tactics, they were in danger between the king and the Parliament; then they assembled for several days together at Windsor to confess themselves to God, and seek His assistance; and they discovered that all their evils came from the conferences they had had the weakness to propose to the king. 'And in this path the Lord led us,' said Adjutant Allen, 'not only to see our sin, but also our duty; and this so unanimously set with weight upon each heart that none was able hardly to speak a word to each other for bitter weeping, partly in the sense and shame of our iniquities; of our unbelief, base fear of men, and carnal consultations (as the fruit thereof) with our own wisdoms, and not with the Word of the Lord.'[3] Then they resolved to bring the king to judgment and death, and did as they had resolved.

Around them, fanaticism and folly gained ground. Independents, Millenarians, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Libertines, Familists, Quakers, Enthusiasts, Seekers, Perfectionists, Socinians, Arians, anti-Trinitarians, anti-Scripturalists, Sceptics; the list of sects is interminable. Women, troopers, suddenly got up into the pulpit and preached. The strangest ceremonies took place in public. In 1644, says Dr. Featly, the Anabaptists rebaptized a hundred men and women together at twilight, in streams, in branches of the Thames and elsewhere, plunging them in the water over head and ears. One Oates, in the county of Essex, was brought before a jury for the murder of Anne Martin, who died a few days after her baptism of a cold which had seized her. George Fox the Quaker spoke with God, and witnessed with a loud voice, in the streets and market-places, against the sins of the age. William Simpson, one of his disciples, 'was moved of the Lord to go, at several times, for three years, naked and barefoot before them, as a sign unto them, in the markets, courts, towns, cities, to priests' houses, and to great men's houses, telling them, so shall they all be stripped naked, as he was stripped naked. And sometimes he was moved to put on

[1] *Cromwell's Letters*, ed. Carlyle, iii. 373.

[2] See his speeches. The style is disjointed, obscure, impassioned, marvellous, like that of a man who is not master of his wits, and who yet sees straight by a sort of intuition.

[3] *Cromwell's Letters*, i. 265.

hair sackcloth, and to besmear his face, and to tell them, so would the Lord besmear all their religion as he was besmeared.[1]

'A female came into Whitehall Chapel stark naked, in the midst of public worship, the Lord Protector himself being present. A Quaker came to the door of the Parliament House with a drawn sword, and wounded several who were present, saying that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to kill every man that sat in the house.' The Fifth Monarchy men believed that Christ was about to descend to reign in person upon earth for a thousand years, with the saints for His ministers. The Ranters looked upon furious vociferations and contortions as the principal signs of faith. The Seekers thought that religious truth could only be seized in a sort of mystical fog, with doubt and fear. The Muggletonians decided that 'John Reeve and Ludovick Muggleton were the two last prophets and messengers of God;' they declared the Quakers possessed of the devil, exorcised him, and prophesied that William Penn would be damned. I have before mentioned James Nayler, an old quartermaster of General Lambert, adored as a god by his followers. Several women led his horse, others cast before him their kerchiefs and scarves, singing, Holy, holy, Lord God. They called him 'lovely among ten thousand, the only Son of God, the prophet of the Most High, King of Israel, the eternal Son of Justice, the Prince of Peace, Jesus, him in whom the hope of Israel rests.' One of them, Dorcas Erbury, declared that she had lain dead for two whole days in her prison in Exeter Gaol, and that Nayler had restored her to life by laying his hands upon her. Sarah Blackbury finding him a prisoner, took him by the hand and said, 'Rise up my love, my dove, my fairest one: why stayest thou among the pots?' Then she kissed his hand and fell down before him. When he was put in the pillory, some of his disciples began to sing, weep, smite their breasts; others kissed his hands, rested on his bosom, and kissed his wounds.[2] Bedlam broken loose could not have surpassed them.

Underneath these disorderly bubbles at the surface, the wise and deep strata of the nation had settled, and the new faith was doing its work with them,—a practical and positive, a political and moral work. Whilst the German Reformation, after the German wont, resulted in great volumes and a scholastic system, the English Reformation, after the English wont, resulted in action and establishments. 'How the Church of Christ shall be governed;' that was the great question which was discussed among the sects. The House of Commons asked the assembly of theologians: If the classical, provincial, and local assemblies were *jure divino*, and instituted by the will and appointment

[1] *A Journal of the Life, etc., of that Ancient, Eminent, and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox*, 6th edit., 1836.

[2] Burton's *Parliamentary Diary*, i. 46–173. Neal, *History of the Puritans* iii., Supplt.

of Jesus Christ? If they were all so? If only some were so, and which? If appeals carried by the elders of a congregation to provincial, departmental, and national assemblies were *jure divino*, and according to the will and appointment of Jesus Christ? If some only were *jure divino*? Which? If the power of the assemblies in such appeals was *jure divino*, and by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ? and a hundred other questions of the same kind. Parliament declared that, according to Scripture, the dignities of priest and bishop were equal; it regulated ordinations, convocations, excommunications, jurisdictions, elections; spent half its time and exerted all its power in establishing the Presbyterian Church.[1] So, with the Independents, fervour engendered courage and discipline. 'Cromwell's regiment of horse were most of them freeholders' sons, who engaged in the war upon principles of conscience; and that being well armed within, by the satisfaction of their consciences, and without with good iron arms, they would as one man stand firmly and charge desperately.'[2] This army, in which inspired corporals preached to lukewarm colonels, acted with the solidity and precision of a Russian regiment: it was a duty, a duty to God, to fire straight and march in good order; and a perfect Christian made a perfect soldier. There was no separation here between theory and practice, between private and public life, between the spiritual and the temporal. They wished to apply Scripture to 'establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth,' to institute not only a Christian church, but a Christian society, to change the law into a guardian of morals, to exact piety and virtue; and for a while they succeeded in it. 'Though the discipline of the church was at an end, there was nevertheless an uncommon spirit of devotion among people in the parliament quarters; the Lord's day was observed with remarkable strictness, the churches being crouded with numerous and attentive hearers three or four times in the day; the officers of the peace patroled the streets, and shut up all publick houses; there was no travelling on the road, or walking in the fields, except in cases of absolute necessity. Religious exercises were set up in private families, as reading the Scriptures, family prayer, repeating sermons, and singing of psalms, which was so universal, that you might walk through the city of London on the evening of the Lord's day, without seeing an idle person, or hearing anything but the voice of prayer or praise from churches and private houses.'[3] People would rise before the day, and walk a great distance to be able to hear the word of God. 'There were no gaming-houses, or houses of pleasure; no profane

[1] See Neal, *Hist. of the Puritans*, ii. 418–450.

[2] Whitelocke's *Memorials*, i. 68.

[3] Neal, ii. 553. Compare with the French Revolution. When the Bastile was demolished, they wrote on the ruins these words: 'Ici l'on danse.' From this contrast we see the difference between the two doctrines and the two nations.

swearing, drunkenness, or any kind of debauchery.'[1] The Parliamentary soldiers came in great numbers to listen to sermons, spoke of religion, prayed and sang psalms together, when on duty. In 1644 Parliament forbade the sale of commodities on Sunday, and ordained 'that no person shall travel, or carry a burden, or do any worldly labour, upon penalty of 10s. for the traveller, and 5s. for every burden. That no person shall on the Lord's day use, or be present at, any wrestling, shooting, fowling, ringing of bells for pleasure, markets, wakes, church-ales, dancing games or sports whatsoever, upon penalty of 5s. to every one above fourteen years of age. And if children are found offending in the premises, their parents or guardians to forfeit 12d. for every offence. If the several fines above mentioned cannot be levied, the offending party shall be set in the stocks for the space of three hours.' When the Independents were in power, the severity was still more harsh. The officers in the army, having convicted one of their quartermasters of blasphemy, condemned him to have his tongue bored with a red hot iron, his sword broken over his head, and himself to be dismissed from the army. During Cromwell's expedition in Ireland, we read that no blasphemy was heard in the camp; the soldiers spent their leisure hours in reading the Bible, singing psalms, and holding religious controversies. In 1650 the punishments inflicted on Sabbath-breakers were redoubled. Stern laws were passed against betting, gallantry was reckoned a crime; the theatres were destroyed, the spectators fined, the actors whipt at the cart's tail; adultery punished with death: in order to reach crime more surely, they persecuted pleasure. But if they were austere against others, they were so against themselves, and practised the virtues they exacted. After the Restoration, two thousand ministers, rather than conform to the new liturgy, resigned their cures, though they and their families had to die of hunger. Many of them, says Baxter, thinking that they were not justified in quitting their ministry after being set apart for it by ordination, preached to such as would hear them in the fields and in certain houses, until they were seized and thrown into prisons, where a great number of them perished. Cromwell's fifty thousand veterans, suddenly disbanded and without resources, did not bring a single recruit to the vagabonds and bandits. 'The Royalists themselves confessed that, in every department of honest industry, the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men, that none was charged with any theft or robbery, that none was heard to ask an alms, and that, if a baker, a mason, or a waggoner attracted notice by his diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers.'[2] Purified by persecution and ennobled by patience, they ended by winning the tolerance of

[1] Neal, *Hist. of the Puritans*, ii. 555.

[2] Macaulay, *Hist. of England* ed. Lady Trevelyan, i. 121.

the law and the respect of the public, and raised the national morality, as they had saved the national liberty. But others, exiles in America, pushed to an extremity this great religious and stoical spirit, with its weaknesses and its power, with its vices and its virtues. Their determination, intensified by a fervent faith, employed in political and practical pursuits, invented the science of emigration, made exile tolerable, drove back the Indians, fertilised the desert, raised a rigid morality into a civil law, founded and armed a church, and on the Bible as a basis built up a new state.[1]

That was not a conception of life from which a genuine literature might be expected to issue. The idea of the beautiful is wanting, and what is a literature without it? The natural expression of the heart's emotions is proscribed, and what is a literature without it? They abolished as impious the free stage and the rich poesy which the Renaissance had brought them. They rejected as profane the ornate style and ample eloquence which had been established around them by the imitation of antiquity and of Italy. They mistrusted reason, and were incapable of philosophy. They ignored the divine languor of Jeremy Taylor, and the touching tenderness of the gospel. Their character exhibits only manliness, their conduct austerity, their mind preciseness. We find amongst them only excited theologians, minute controversialists, energetic men of action, limited and patient minds, engrossed in positive proofs and practical labours, void of general ideas and refined tastes, resting upon texts, dry and obstinate reasoners, who twisted the Scripture in order to extract from it a form of government or a table of dogma. What could be narrower or more repulsive than these pursuits and wrangles? A pamphlet of the time petitions for liberty of conscience, and draws its arguments (1) from the parable of the wheat and the tares which grow together till the harvest; (2) from this maxim of the Apostles, Let every man be thoroughly persuaded in his own mind; (3) from this text, Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; (4) from this divine rule of our Saviour, Do to others what you would they should do unto you. Later, when the furious Commons desired to pass judgment on James Nayler, the trial became entangled in an endless juridical and theological discussion, some declaring that the crime committed was idolatry, others seduction, all emptying out before the House their armoury of commentaries and texts.[2] Seldom is a gene-

[1] A certain John Denis was publicly whipt for having sung a profane song. Mathias, a girl, having given some roasted chestnuts to Jeremiah Boosy, and told him ironically that they would put him into Paradise, was ordered to ask pardon three times in church, and to be three days on bread and water in prison 1660-1670; records of Massachusetts.

[2] 'Upon the common sense of Scripture,' said Major-general Disbrowe, 'there are few but do commit blasphemy, as our Saviour puts it in Mark: "sins, blasphemies; if so, then none without blasphemy." It was charged upon David and Eli's son, "thou hast blasphemed, or caused others to blaspheme." '—Burton's *Diary*, i. 54.

ration found more mutilated in all the faculties which produce contemplation and ornament, more limited in the faculties which nourish discussion and morality. Like a beautiful insect which has become transformed and has lost its wings, so we see the poetic generation of Elizabeth disappear, leaving in its place but a sluggish caterpillar, a stubborn and useful spinner, armed with industrious feet and formidable jaws, spending its existence in eating into old leaves and devouring its enemies. They are without style; they speak like business men; at most, here and there, a pamphlet of Prynne possesses a little vigour. Their histories, like May's for instance, are flat and heavy. Their memoirs, even those of Ludlow and Mrs. Hutchinson, are long, wearisome, mere statements, destitute of personal feelings, void of enthusiasm or entertaining matter; 'they seem to ignore themselves, and are engrossed by the general prospects of their cause.'[1] Good works of piety, solid and convincing sermons; sincere, edifying, exact, methodical books, like those of Baxter, Barclay, Calamy, John Owen; personal narratives, like that of Baxter, like Fox's journal, Bunyan's life, a large collection of documents and arguments, conscientiously arranged,—this is all they offer: the Puritan destroys the artist, stiffens the man, fetters the writer; and leaves of artist, man, writer, only a sort of abstract being, the slave of a watchword. If a Milton springs up amongst them, it is because by his wide curiosity, his travels, his comprehensive education, above all by his youth saturated in the great poetry of the preceding age, and by his independence of spirit, loftily adhered to even against the sectarians, Milton passes beyond sectarianism. Strictly speaking, they could but have one poet, an involuntary poet, a madman, a martyr, a hero, and a victim of grace; a genuine preacher, who attains the beautiful by accident, whilst pursuing the useful on principle; a poor tinker, who, employing images so as to be understood by mechanics, sailors, servant-girls, attained, without pretending to it, eloquence and high art.

VI.

After the Bible, the book most widely read in England is the *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan. The reason is, that the basis of Protestantism is the doctrine of salvation by grace, and that no writer has equalled Bunyan in making this doctrine understood.

To treat well of supernatural impressions, one must have been subject to them. Bunyan had that kind of imagination which produces them. Powerful as that of an artist, but more vehement, this imagination worked in the man without his co-operation, and besieged him with visions which he had neither willed nor foreseen. From that moment there was in him as it were a second self, dominating the first, grand and terrible, whose apparitions were sudden, its motions unknown, which redoubled or crushed his faculties, prostrated or transported him,

[1] Guizot, *Portraits Politiques*, 5th ed., 1862

bathed him in the sweat of anguish, ravished him with trances of joy, and which by its force, strangeness, independence, impressed upon him the presence and the action of a foreign and superior master. Bunyan, like Saint Theresa, was from infancy 'greatly troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell-fire,' sad in the midst of pleasures, believing himself damned, and so despairing, that he wished he was a devil, 'supposing they were only tormentors; that if it must needs be that I went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented myself.'[1] There already was the assault of exact and bodily images. Under their influence reflexion ceased, and the man was suddenly spurred into action. The first movement carried him with closed eyes, as down a steep slope, into mad resolutions. One day, 'being in the field, with my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway: so I, having a stick, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers, by which act, had not God been merciful to me, I might, by my desperateness, have brought myself to my end.'[2] In his first approaches to conversion he was extreme in his emotions, and penetrated to the heart by the sight of physical objects, 'adoring' priest, service, altar, vestment. 'This conceit grew so strong upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest (though never so sordid and debauched in his life), I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit unto him; yea, I thought, for the love I did bear unto them (supposing they were the ministers of God), I could have laid down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work did so intoxicate and bewitch me.'[3] Already his ideas clung to him with that irresistible hold which constitutes monomania; no matter how absurd they were, they ruled him, not by their truth, but by their presence. The thought of an impossible danger terrified him as much as the sight of an imminent peril. As a man hung over an abyss by a sound rope, he forgot that the rope was sound, and vertigo seized upon him. After the fashion of English villagers, he loved bell-ringing: when he became a Puritan, he considered the amusement profane, and gave it up; yet, impelled by his desire, he would go into the belfry and watch the ringers. 'But quickly after, I began to think, "How if one of the bells should fall?" Then I chose to stand under a main beam, that lay overthwart the steeple, from side to side, thinking here I might stand sure: but then I thought again, should the bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this beam. This made me stand in the steeple-door; and now, thought I, I am safe enough, for if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding. So after this I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go any farther than the steeple-door; but then it came into my

[1] *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, § 7. [2] *Ibid.* § 12 [3] *Ibid.* § 17

head. "How if the steeple itself should fall?" And this thought (it may, for aught I know, when I stood and looked on) did continually so shake my mind, that I durst not stand at the steeple-door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall upon my head.'[1] Frequently the mere conception of a sin became for him a temptation so involuntary and so strong, that he felt upon him the sharp claw of the devil. The fixed idea swelled in his head like a painful abscess, full of sensitiveness and of his life's blood. 'Now no sin would serve but that: if it were to be committed by speaking of such a word, then I have been as if my mouth would have spoken that word whether I would or no; and in so strong a measure was the temptation upon me, that often I have been ready to clap my hands under my chin, to hold my mouth from opening; at other times, to leap with my head downward into some muckhill hole, to keep my mouth from speaking'[2] Later, in the middle of a sermon which he was preaching, he was assailed by blasphemous thoughts: the word came to his lips, and all his power of resistance was barely able to restrain the muscle excited by the tyrannous brain.

Once the minister of the parish was preaching against the sin of dancing, oaths, and games, when he was struck with the idea that the sermon was for him, and returned home full of trouble. But he ate; his stomach being charged, discharged his brain, and his remorse was dispersed. Like a true child, entirely absorbed by the emotion of the moment, he was transported, jumped out, and ran to the sports. He had thrown his ball, and was about to begin again, when a voice from heaven suddenly pierced his soul. '"Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore, leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was as if I had with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus look down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if He did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other ungodly practices.'[3] Suddenly reflecting that his sins were very great, and that he would certainly be damned whatever he did, he resolved to enjoy himself in the meantime, and to sin as much as he could in his life. He took up his ball again, recommenced the game with ardour, and swore louder and oftener than ever. A month afterwards, being reproved by a woman, 'I was silenced, and put to secret shame, and that too, as I thought, before the God of heaven: wherefore, while I stood there, hanging down my head, I wished that I might be a little child again, and that my father might learn me to speak without this wicked way of swearing; for, thought I, I am so accustomed to it, that it is in vain to think of a reformation, for that could never be. But how it came to pass I know not, I did from this time forward so leave my swearing, that it was a

[1] *Grace Abounding*, §§ 33, 34. [2] *Ibid.* § 103. [3] *Ibid* § 22.

great wonder to myself to observe it; and whereas before I knew not how to speak unless I put an oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority, now I could without it speak better, and with more pleasantness, than ever I could before.'[1] These sudden alternations, these vehement resolutions, this unlooked-for renewing of heart, are the products of an involuntary and impassioned imagination, which by its hallucinations, its mastery, its fixed ideas, its mad ideas, prepares the way for a poet, and announces one inspired.

In him circumstances develop character; his kind of life develops his kind of mind. He was born in the lowest and most despised rank, a tinker's son, himself a wandering tinker, with a wife as poor as himself, so that they had not a spoon or a dish between them. He had been taught in childhood to read and write, but he had since 'almost wholly lost what he had learned.' Education draws out and disciplines a man; fills him with varied and rational ideas; prevents him from sinking into monomania or being excited by transport; gives him determinate thoughts instead of eccentric fancies, pliable opinions for fixed convictions; replaces impetuous images by calm reasonings, sudden resolves by the results of reflection; furnishes us with the wisdom and ideas of others; gives us conscience and self-command. Suppress this reason and this discipline, and consider the poor working man at his work; his head works while his hands work, not ably, with methods acquired from any logic he might have mustered, but with dark emotions, beneath a disorderly flow of confused images. Morning and evening, the hammer which he uses in his trade, drives in with its deafening sounds the same thought perpetually returning and self-communing. A troubled, obstinate vision floats before him in the brightness of the hammered and quivering metal. In the red furnace where the iron is bubbling, in the clang of the hammered brass, in the black corners where the damp shadow creeps, he sees the flame and darkness of hell, and the rattling of eternal chains. Next day he sees the same image, the day after, the whole week, month, year. His brow wrinkles, his eyes grow sad, and his wife hears him groan in the night-time. She remembers that she has two volumes in an old bag, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety;* she spells them out to console him; and the impressive thoughtfulness, already sublime, made more so by the slowness with which it is read, sinks like an oracle into his subdued faith. The braziers of the devils—the golden harps of heaven—the bleeding Christ on the cross,—each of these deep-rooted ideas sprouts poisonously or wholesomely in his diseased brain, spreads, pushes out and springs higher with a ramification of fresh visions, so crowded, that in his encumbered mind he has no further place nor air for more conceptions. Will he rest when he sets forth in the winter on his tramp? During his long solitary wanderings, over wild heaths, in cursed and

[1] *Grace Abounding*, §§ 27 and 28.

haunted bogs, always abandoned to his own thoughts, the inevitable idea pursues him. These neglected roads where he sticks in the mud, these sluggish rivers which he crosses on the cranky ferry-boat, these threatening whispers of the woods at night, where in perilous places the livid moon shadows out ambushed forms,—all that he sees and hears falls into an involuntary poem around the one absorbing idea; thus it changes into a vast body of sensible legends, and multiplies its power as it multiplies its details. Having become a dissenter, Bunyan is shut up for twelve years, having no other amusement but the *Book of Martyrs* and the Bible, in one of those infectious prisons where the Puritans rotted under the Restoration. There he is, still alone, thrown back upon himself by the monotony of his dungeon, besieged by the terrors of the Old Testament, by the vengeful outpourings or denunciations of the prophets, by the thunder-striking words of Paul, by the spectacle of trances and of martyrs, face to face with God, now in despair, now consoled, troubled with involuntary images and unlooked-for emotions, seeing alternately devil and angels, the actor and the witness of an internal drama whose vicissitudes he is able to relate. He writes them: it is his book. You see now the condition of this inflamed brain. Poor in ideas, full of images, given up to a fixed and single thought, plunged into this thought by his mechanical pursuit, by his prison and his readings, by his knowledge and his ignorance, circumstances, like nature, make him a visionary and an artist, furnish him with supernatural impressions and sensible images, teaching him the history of grace and the means of expressing it.

The *Pilgrim's Progress* is a manual of devotion for the use of simple folk, whilst it is an allegorical poem of grace. In it we hear a man of the people speaking to the people, who would render intelligible to all the terrible doctrine of damnation and salvation.[1] According to Bunyan,

[1] This is an abstract of the events:—From highest heaven a voice has proclaimed vengeance against the City of Destruction, where lives a sinner of the name of *Christian*. Terrified, he rises up amid the jeers of his neighbours, and departs, for fear of being devoured by the fire which is to consume the criminals. A helpful man, *Evangelist*, shows him the right road. A treacherous man, *Worldly-wise*, tries to turn him aside. His companion, *Pliable*, who had followed him at first, gets stuck in the Slough of Despond, and leaves him. He advances bravely across the dirty water and the slippery mud, and reaches the *Strait Gate*, where a wise *Interpreter* instructs him by visible shows, and points out the way to the Heavenly City. He passes before a cross, and the heavy burden of sins, which he carried on his back, is loosened and falls off. He painfully climbs the steep hill of *Difficulty*, and reaches a great castle, where *Watchful*, the guardian, gives him in charge to his good daughters *Piety* and *Prudence*, who warn him and arm him against the monsters of hell. He finds his road barred by one of these demons, *Apollyon*, who bids him abjure obedience to the heavenly King. After a long fight he slays him. Yet the way grows narrow, the shades fall thicker, sulphurous flames rise along the road: it is the valley of the *Shadow of Death*. He passes it, and arrives at the town of Vanity, a vast fair of business, deceits, and shows, which he walks

we are 'children of wrath,' condemned from our birth, guilty by nature, justly predestined to destruction. Under this formidable thought the heart gives way. The unhappy man relates how he trembled in all his limbs, and in his fits it seemed to him as though the bones of his chest would break. 'One day,' he tells us, 'I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and after long musing, I lifted up my head, but methought I saw, as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me. O how happy now was every creature over I was! For they stood fast, and kept their station, but I was gone and lost.'[1] The devils gathered together against the repentant sinner; they choked his sight, besieged him with phantoms, yelled at his side to drag him down their precipices; and the black valley into which the pilgrim plunges, almost matches by the horror of its sight the anguish of the terrors by which he is assailed:—

'I saw then in my Dream, so far as this Valley reached, there was on the right hand a very deep Ditch; that Ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all ages, and have both there miserably perished. Again, behold on the left hand, there was a very dangerous Quag, into which, if even a good man falls, he can find no bottom for his foot to stand on. . . .

'The path-way was here also exceeding narrow, and therefore good Christian was the more put to it; for when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the mire on the other; also when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on, and I heard him here sigh bitterly; for, besides the dangers mentioned above, the path-way was here so dark, that ofttimes, when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where, or upon what he should set it next.

'About the midst of this Valley, I perceived the mouth of Hell to be, and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now thought Christian, what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises, . . . that he was forced to put up his Sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called All-prayer. So he cried in my hearing: "O Lord I beseech thee deliver my soul." Thus he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him: Also he heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the Streets.'[2]

by with lowered eyes, not wishing to take part in its festivities or falsehoods. The people of the place beat him, throw him into prison, condemn him as a traitor and rebel, burn his companion *Faithful*. Escaped from their hands, he falls into those of *Giant Despair*, who beats him, leaves him in a poisonous dungeon without food, and giving him daggers and cords, advises him to rid himself from so many misfortunes. At last he reaches the *Delectable Mountains*, whence he sees the holy city. To enter it he has only to cross a deep river, where there is no foothold, where the water dims the sight, and which is called the river of Death

[1] Bunyan's *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, § 187.

[2] *Pilgrim's Progress*, Cambridge, 1862, First Part, p 64.

Against this anguish, neither his good deeds, nor his prayers, nor his justice, nor all the justice and all the prayers of all other men, could defend him. Grace alone justifies. God must impute to him the purity of Christ, and save him by a free choice. What is more full of passion than the scene in which, under the name of his poor pilgrim, he relates his own doubts, his conversion, his joy, and the sudden change of his heart?

'Then the water stood in mine eyes, and I asked further, But Lord, may such a great sinner as I am be indeed accepted of thee, and be saved by thee? And I heard him say, And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . . And now was my heart full of joy, mine eyes full of tears, and mine affections running over with love to the Name, People, and Ways of Jesus Christ. . . .

'It made me see that all the World, notwithstanding all the righteousness thereof, is in a state of condemnation. It made me see that God the Father, though he be just, can justly justify the coming sinner. It made me greatly ashamed of the vileness of my former life, and confounded me with the sense of mine own ignorance; for there never came thought into my heart before now, that shewed me so the beauty of Jesus Christ. It made me love a holy life, and long to do something for the Honour and Glory of the Name of the Lord Jesus; yea, I thought that had I now a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I could spill it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.'[1]

Such an emotion does not weigh literary calculations. Allegory, the most artificial kind, is natural to Bunyan. If he employs it here, it is because he does so throughout; if he employs it throughout, it is from necessity, not choice. As children, countrymen, and all uncultivated minds, he transforms arguments into parables; he only grasps truth when it is made simple by images; abstract terms elude him; he must touch forms and contemplate colours. Dry general truths are a sort of algebra, acquired by the mind slowly and after much trouble, against our primitive inclination, which is to observe detailed events and sensible objects; man being incapable of contemplating pure formulas until he is transformed by ten years' reading and reflection. We understand at once the term purification of heart; Bunyan understands it fully only, after translating it by this fable:—

'Then the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a very large Parlour that was full of dust, because never swept; the which after he had reviewed a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. Now when he began to sweep, the dust began so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been choaked. Then said the Interpreter to a Damsel that stood by, Bring hither the Water, and sprinkle the Room; the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure.

'Then said Christian, What means this?

'The Interpreter answered, This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet Grace of the Gospel: the dust is his Original Sin, and inward Corruptions, that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p 160.

at first, is the Law; but she that brought water, and did sprinkle it, is the Gospel. Now, whereas thou sawest that so soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about that the Room by him could not be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choaked therewith; this is to shew thee, that the Law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for it doth not give power to subdue.

'Again, as thou sawest the Damsel sprinkle the room with Water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure; this is to shew thee, that when the Gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then I say, even as thou sawest the Damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with Water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through the faith of it, and consequently fit for the King of Glory to inhabit.'[1]

These repetitions, embarrassed phrases, familiar comparisons, this frank style, whose awkwardness recalls the childish periods of Herodotus, and whose light-heartedness recalls tales for children, prove that if his work is allegorical, it is so in order that it may be intelligible, and that Bunyan is a poet because he is a child.[2]

Again, under his simplicity you will find power, and in his puerility the vision. These allegories are hallucinations as clear, complete, and sound as ordinary perceptions. No one but Spenser is so lucid. Imaginary objects rise of themselves within him. He has no trouble in calling them up or forming them. They agree in all their details with all the details of the precept which they represent, as a pliant veil fits the body which it covers. He distinguishes and arranges all the parts of the landscape—here the river, on the right the castle, a flag on its left turret, the setting sun three feet lower, an oval cloud in the front part of the sky—with the preciseness of a carpenter. We fancy in reading him that we are looking at the old maps of the time, in which the striking features of the angular cities are marked on the copperplate by a tool as certain as a pair of compasses.[3] Dialogues flow from his pen as in a dream. He does not seem to be thinking; we should even

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 26.

[2] Here is another of his allegories, almost spiritual, so just and simple it is. See *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 68: Now I saw in my Dream, that at the end of this Valley lay blood, bones, ashes, and mangled bodies of men, even of Pilgrims that had gone this way formerly; and while I was musing what should be the reason, I espied a little before me a Cave, where two Giants, Pope and Pagan, dwelt in old time; by whose power and tyranny the men whose bones, blood, ashes, etc., lay there, were cruelly put to death. But by this place Christian went without much danger, whereat I somewhat wondered; but I have learnt since, that Pagan has been dead many a day; and as for the other, though he be yet alive, he is by reason of age, and also of the many shrewd brushes that he met with in his younger days, grown so crazy, and stiff in his joints, that he can now do little more than sit in his Cave's mouth, grinning at Pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails, because he cannot come at them.

[3] For instance Hollar's work, *Cities of Germany*

say that he was not himself there. Events and speeches seem to grow and dispose themselves within him, independently of his will. Nothing, as a rule, is colder than the characters in an allegory; his are living. Looking upon these details, so small and familiar, illusion gains upon us. Giant Despair, a simple abstraction, becomes as real in his hands as an English gaoler or farmer. He is heard talking by night in bed with his wife Diffidence, who gives him good advice, because here, as in other households, the strong and brutal animal is the least cunning of the two:—

'Then she counselled him that when he arose in the morning he should (take the two prisoners and) beat them without mercy. So when he arose, he getteth him a grievous Crab-tree Cudgel, and goes down into the Dungeon to them, and there first falls to rating of them as if they were dogs, although they gave him never a word of distaste. Then he falls upon them, and beats them fearfully, in such sort, that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn them upon the floor.'[1]

This stick, chosen with a forester's experience, this instinct of rating first and storming to get oneself into trim for knocking down, are traits which attest the sincerity of the narrator, and succeed in persuading the reader. Bunyan has the freedom, the tone, the ease, and the clearness of Homer; he is as close to Homer as an Anabaptist tinker could be to an heroic singer, a creator of gods.

I err; he is nearer. Before the sentiment of the sublime, inequalities are levelled. The depth of emotion raises peasant and poet to the same eminence; and here also, allegory stands the peasant in stead. It alone, in the absence of ecstasy, can paint heaven; for it does not pretend to paint it: expressing it by a figure, it declares it invisible, as a glowing sun at which we cannot look full, and whose image we observe in a mirror or a stream. The ineffable world thus retains all its mystery; warned by the allegory, we imagine splendours beyond all which it presents to us; we feel behind the beauties which are opened to us, the infinite which is concealed; and the ideal city, vanishing as soon as it appears, ceases to resemble the big Whitehall imagined for Jehovah by Milton. Read the arrival of the pilgrims in the celestial land. Saint Theresa has nothing more beautiful:—

'Yea, here they heard continually the singing of Birds, and saw every day the Flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the Turtle in the land. In this Country the Sun shineth night and day. . . . Here they were within sight of the City they were going to, also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of Heaven. . . . Here they heard voices from out of the City, loud voices, saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh, behold his reward is with him!" Here all the inhabitants of the Country called them "The holy People, The redeemed of the Lord, Sought out, etc."

'Now as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 126.

remote from the Kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the City, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of Pearls and Precious Stones, also the Street thereof was paved with Gold; so that by reason of the natural glory of the City, and the reflection of the Sun-beams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick; Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore here they lay by it a while, crying out because of their pangs, "If you see my Beloved, tell him that I am sick of love."[1] . . .

'They therefore went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the City was framed was higher than the Clouds. They therefore went up through the Regions of the Air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted, because they safely got over the River, and had such glorious Companions to attend them.

'The talk that they had with the Shining Ones was about the glory of the place, who told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. There, said they, is the Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of Angels, and the Spirits of just men made perfect. You are going now, said they, to the Paradise of God, wherein you shall see the Tree of Life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white Robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of Eternity.[2]

'There came out also at this time to meet them, several of the King's Trumpeters, cloathed in white and shining Raiment, who with melodious noises and loud, made even the Heavens to echo with their sound. These Trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with ten thousand welcomes from the World, and this they did with shouting and sound of Trumpet.

'This done, they compassed them round on every side; some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand, some on the left (as 't were to guard them through the upper Regions), continually sounding as they went with melodious noise, in notes on high; so that the very sight was to them that could behold it, as if Heaven itself was come down to meet them. . . .

'And now were these two men as 't were in Heaven before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of Angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the City itself in view, and they thought they heard all the Bells therein ring to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh, by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed!'[3] . . .

'Now I saw in my Dream that these two men went in at the Gate; and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had Raiment put on that shone like Gold. There was also that met them with Harps and Crowns, and gave them to them, the Harps to praise withal, and the Crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my Dream that all the Bells in the City rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, "Blessing, Honour, Glory, and Power, be to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

'Now, just as the Gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the City shone like the Sun; the Streets also were paved with Gold,

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 174.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 182.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 179.

and in them walked many men, with Crowns on their heads, Palms in their hands, and golden Harps to sing praises withal.

'There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord." And after that they shut up the Gates. Which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.'

He was imprisoned for twelve years and a half; in his dungeon he made wire snares to support himself and his family; he died at the age of sixty in 1688. At the same time Milton lingered obscure and blind. The last two poets of the Reformation thus survived, amid the classical coldness which then dried up English literature, and the social excess which then corrupted English morals. 'Shorn hypocrites, the psalm-singers, gloomy bigots,' such were the names by which men who reformed the manners and renewed the constitution of England were insulted. But oppressed and insulted as they were, their work continued of itself and without noise below the earth; for the ideal which they had raised was, after all, that which the clime suggested and the race demanded. Gradually Puritanism began to approach the world, and the world to approach Puritanism. The Restoration was to fall into evil odour, the Revolution was to come, and under the insensible progress of national sympathy, as well as under the incessant effort of public reflection, parties and doctrines were to rally around a free and moral Protestantism.

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress* First Part, p. 183 etc.

CHAPTER VI.

Milton.

I. General idea of his mind and character — Family — Education — Studies — Travels—Return to England.

II Effects of a concentrated and solitary character—Austerity—Inexperience—Marriage—Children—Domestic Troubles.

III. Combative energy—Polemic against the bishops—Against the king—Enthusiasm and sternness—Theories on government, church, and education —Stoicism and virtue—Old age, occupations, person.

IV. Milton as a prose-writer—Changes during three centuries in appearances and ideas—Heaviness of his logic—*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*—Heavy humour—*Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence*—Clumsiness of discussion—*Defensio Populi Anglicani*—Violence of his animosities —*The Reason of Church Government—Eikonoklastes*—Liberality of doctrines —*Of Reformation—Areopagitica*—Style—Breadth of eloquence—Wealth of imagery—Lyric sublimity of diction.

V. Milton as a poet—How he approaches and is distinct from the poets of the Renaissance—How he gives poetry a moral tone—Profane poems—*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso—Comus—Lycidas*—Religious poems—*Paradise Lost*—Conditions of a genuine epic—They are not to be met with in the age or in the poet—Comparison of Adam and Eve with an English family—Comparison of God and the angels to a monarch's court—The rest of the poem —Comparison between the sentiments of Satan and the republican passions —Lyrical and moral character of the scenery—Loftiness and sense of the moral ideas—Situation of the poet and the poem between two ages—Composition of his genius and his work.

ON the borders of the licentious Renaissance which was drawing to a close, and of the exact school of poetry which was springing up, between the monotonous conceits of Cowley and the correct gallantries of Waller, appeared a mighty and superb mind, prepared by logic and enthusiasm for eloquence and the epic style; liberal, Protestant, a moralist and a poet; adorning the cause of Algernon Sidney and Locke with the inspiration of Spenser and Shakspeare; the heir of a poetical age, the precursor of an austere age, holding his place between the epoch of unbiassed dreamland and the epoch of practical action; like his own Adam, who, entering a hostile earth, heard behind him, in the closed Eden, the dying strains of heaven.

John Milton was not one of those fevered souls, void of self-command, whose rapture takes them by fits, whom a sickly sensibility drives

for ever to the extreme of sorrow or joy, whose pliability prepares them to produce a variety of characters, whose inquietude condemns them to paint the insanity and contradictions of passion. Vast knowledge, close logic, and grand passion: these were his marks. His mind was lucid, his imagination limited. He was incapable of disturbed emotion or of transformation. He conceived the loftiest of ideal beauties, but he conceived only one. He was not born for the drama, but for the ode. He does not create souls, but constructs arguments and experiences emotions. Emotions and arguments, all the forces and actions of his soul, assemble and are arranged beneath a unique sentiment, that of the sublime; and the broad river of lyric poetry streams from him, impetuous, with even flow, splendid as a cloth of gold.

I.

This dominant sense constituted the greatness and the firmness of his character. Against external fluctuations he found a refuge in himself; and the ideal city which he had built in his soul endured, impregnable to all assaults. It was too beautiful, this inner city, for him to wish to leave it; it was too solid to be destroyed. He believed in the sublime with the whole force of his nature, and the whole authority of his logic; and with him, the cultivated reason strengthened by its tests the suggestions of the primitive instinct. With this double armour, man can advance firmly through life. He who is always feeding himself with demonstrations is capable of believing, willing, persevering in belief and will; he does not turn aside to every event and every passion, as that fickle and pliable being whom we call a poet; he remains at rest in fixed principles. He is capable of embracing a cause, and of continuing attached to it, whatever may happen, spite of all, to the end. No seduction, no emotion, no accident, no change alters the stability of his conviction or the lucidity of his knowledge. On the first day, on the last day, during the whole time, he preserves intact the entire system of his clear ideas, and the logical vigour of his brain sustains the manly vigour of his heart. When at length, as here, this close logic is employed in the service of noble ideas, enthusiasm is added to constancy. Man holds his opinions not only as true, but as sacred. He fights for them, not only as a soldier, but as a priest. He is impassioned, devoted, religious, heroic. Rarely is such a mixture seen; but it was clearly seen in Milton.

He was of a family in which courage, moral nobility, the love of art, were present to whisper the most beautiful and eloquent words around his cradle. His mother was a most exemplary woman, well known through all the neighbourhood for her benevolence.[1] His

[1] Matre probatissimâ et eleesmosynis per viciniam potissimum nota.—*Defensio secunda. Life of Milton*, by Keightley.

father, a student of Christ Church, and disinherited as a Protestant, had alone made his fortune, and, amidst his occupations as a scrivener or writer, had preserved the taste for letters, being unwilling to give up 'his liberal and intelligent tastes to the extent of becoming altogether a slave to the world;' he wrote verses, was an excellent musician, one of the best composers in his time; he chose Cornelius Jansen to paint his son's portrait when in his tenth year, and gave his child the widest and fullest literary education.[1] Let the reader try to picture this child, in the street inhabited by merchants, in this citizen-like and scholarly, religious and poetical family, whose manners were regular and their aspirations lofty, where they set the psalms to music, and wrote madrigals in honour of Oriana the queen,[2] where music, letters, painting, all the adornments of the beauty-loving Renaissance, decorated the sustained gravity, the hard-working honesty, the deep Christianity of the Reformation. All Milton's genius springs from this; he carried the splendour of the Renaissance into the earnestness of the Reformation, the magnificence of Spenser into the severity of Calvin, and, with his family, found himself at the confluence of the two civilizations which he combined. Before he was ten years old he had a learned tutor, 'a Puritan, who cut his hair short;' after that he went to Saint Paul's School, then to the University of Cambridge, that he might be instructed in 'polite literature;' and at the age of twelve he worked, in spite of his weak eyes and headaches, until midnight and even later. His John the Baptist, a character resembling himself, says:

> 'When I was yet a child, no childish play
> To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
> Serious to learn and know, and thence to do,
> What might be public good; myself I thought
> Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
> All righteous things.'[3]

In fact, at school, then at Cambridge, then with his father, he was strengthening and preparing himself with all his power, free from all blame, and loved by all good men; traversing the vast fields of Greek and Latin literature, not only the great writers, but all the writers, down to the half of the middle-age; and simultaneously the ancient Hebrew, Syriac and rabbinical Hebrew, French and Spanish, the old English literature, all the Italian literature, with such zeal and profit that he wrote Italian and Latin verse and prose like an Italian or a Roman; beyond this, music, mathematics, theology, and much besides. A serious thought regulated this great toil. 'The church, to whose

[1] My father destined me while yet a little child for the study of humane letters.'—*Life*, by Masson, 1859 i 51.

[2] Queen Elizabeth.

[3] *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Cleveland, 1865, *Paradise Regained* Book i. *v.* 201–206

service, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions: till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.'[1]

He refused to be a priest from the same feelings that he had wished it: the desire and the renunciation all sprang from the same source—a fixed resolve to act nobly. Falling back into the life of a layman, he continued to cultivate and perfect himself, studying with passion and with method, but without pedantry or rigour; nay, rather, after his master Spenser, in *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, he set forth in sparkling and variegated dress the wealth of mythology, nature, and fancy; then, sailing for the land of science and beauty, he visited Italy, made the acquaintance of Grotius and Galileo, sought the society of the learned, the men of letters, the men of the world, heard the musicians, steeped himself in all the beauties stored up by the Renaissance at Florence and Rome. Everywhere his learning, his fine Italian and Latin style, secured him the friendship and attachment of scholars, so that, on his return to Florence, he 'was as well received as if he had returned to his native country.' He collected books and music, which he sent to England, and thought of traversing Sicily and Greece, those two homes of ancient letters and arts. Of all the flowers that opened to the Southern sun under the influence of the two great Paganisms, he gathered freely the sweetest and the most exquisite of odours, but without staining himself with the mud which surrounded them. 'I call the Deity to witness,' he wrote later, 'that in all those places in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame, I never once deviated from the paths of integrity and virtue, and perpetually reflected that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it could not elude the inspection of God.'[2]

Amid the licentious gallantries and inane sonnets such as those of the Cicisbei and Academicians lavished forth, he had retained his sublime idea of poetry: he thought to choose a heroic subject from ancient English history; and as he says, 'I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the

[1] Milton's *Prose Works*, ed. St. John, 5 vols., 1848, *The Reason of Church Government*, ii. 482.

[2] *Ibid.*, *Second Defence of the People of England* i. 257. See also his *Italian Sonnets*, with their religious sentiment.

experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.'[1] Amidst all, he loved Dante and Petrarch for their purity, telling himself that 'if unchastity in a woman, whom St. Paul terms the glory of man, be such a scandal and dishonour, then certainly in a man, who is both the image and glory of God, it must, though commonly not so thought, be much more deflouring and dishonourable.'[2] He thought 'that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight,' for the practice and defence of chastity, and he kept himself virgin till his marriage. Whatever the temptation might be, whatever the attraction or fear, it found him equally opposed and equally firm. From a sense of gravity and propriety he avoided all religious disputes; but if his own creed were attacked, he defended it 'without any reserve or fear,' even in Rome, before the Jesuits who plotted against him, within a few paces of the Inquisition and the Vatican. Perilous duty, instead of driving him away, attracted him. When the Revolution began to threaten, he returned, drawn by conscience, as a soldier who hastens to danger at the noise of arms, convinced, as he himself tells us, that it was a shame to him leisurely to spend his life abroad, and for his own pleasure, whilst his fellow-countrymen were striving for their liberty. In battle he appeared in the front ranks as a volunteer, courting danger everywhere. Throughout his education and throughout his youth, in his profane readings and his sacred studies, in his acts and his maxims, already a ruling and permanent thought grew manifest—the resolution to develop and unfold within him the ideal man.

II.

Two special powers lead mankind—impulse and idea: the one influencing sensitive, unfettered, poetical souls, capable of transformations, like Shakspeare; the other governing active, combative, heroic souls, capable of immutability, like Milton. The first are sympathetic and effusive; the second are concentrative and reserved.[3] The first give themselves up, the others withhold themselves. These, by reliance and sociability, with an artistic instinct and a sudden imitative comprehension, involuntarily take the tone and disposition of the men and things which surround them, and an immediate counterpoise is effected between the inner and the outer man. Those, by mistrust and rigidity, with a combative instinct and a quick reference to rule, become naturally thrown back upon themselves, and in their narrow retirement no longer feel the solicitations and contradictions of their surroundings.

[1] Milton's Works, *Apology for Smectymnuus*, iii. 117.

[2] *Ibid*, 122. See also his *Treatise on Divorce*, which shows clearly Milton's meaning.

[3] 'Though Christianity had been but slightly taught me, yet a certain reservedness of natural disposition, and moral discipline, learnt out of the noblest philosophy, was enough to keep me in disdain of far less incontinences than this of the bordello.'—*Apology for Smectymnuus*, iii. p 122.

They have formed a model, and thenceforth this model like a watchword restrains or urges them on. Like all powers destined to have sway, the inner idea grows and absorbs to its use the rest of their being. They bury it in themselves by meditation, they nourish it with reasoning, they put it in communication with the chain of all their doctrines and all their experiences; so that when a temptation assails them, it is not an isolated principle which it attacks, but it encounters the whole combination of their belief, an infinitely ramified combination, and too strong for a sensible seduction to tear asunder. Thus a man is by habit upon his guard; the combative attitude is habitual to him, and he stands erect, firm in the pride of his courage and the inveteracy of his determination.

A soul thus fortified is like a diver in his bell;[1] it passes through life as he passes through the sea, unstained but isolated. On his return to England, Milton fell back among his books, and received a few pupils, from whom he exacted, as from himself, continuous toil, serious reading, a frugal diet, a strict behaviour; the life of a recluse, almost of a monk. Suddenly, in a month, after a country visit, he married.[2] A few weeks afterwards, his wife returned to her father's house, would not return, took no notice of his letters, and sent back his messenger with scorn. The two characters had come into collision. Nothing displeases women more than an austere and self-contained character. They see that they have no hold upon it; its dignity awes them, its pride repels, its preoccupations keep them aloof; they feel themselves of less value, neglected for general interests or speculative curiosities; judged, moreover, and that after an inflexible rule; at most regarded with condescension, as a sort of less reasonable and inferior being, shut out from the equality which they look for, and the love which alone can recompense to them the loss of equality. The 'priest' character is made for solitude; the tact, abandon, charm, pleasantness, and sweetness necessary to all companionship, is wanting to it; we admire him, but we go no further, especially if, like Milton's wife, we are somewhat dull and commonplace,[3] adding mediocrity of intellect to the repugnance of our hearts. He had, so his biographers say, a certain gravity of nature, or severity of mind which would not condescend to petty things, but kept him in the clouds, in a region which is not that of the household. He was accused of being harsh, choleric; and certainly he stood upon his manly

[1] An expression of Jean Paul Richter. See an excellent article on Milton in the *Nat. Review*, July 1859.

[2] 1643, at the age of 35.

[3] 'Mute and spiritless mate.' 'The bashful muteness of the virgin may oftentimes hide all the unloveliness and natural sloth which is really unfit for conversation.' 'A man shall find himself bound fast to an image of earth and phlegm, with whom he looked to be the copartner of a sweet and delightsome society'—*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.* A pretty woman will say in reply: I cannot love a man who carries his head like the Sacrament.

dignity, his authority as a husband, and was not so greatly esteemed, respected, studied, as he thought he deserved to be. In short, he passed the day amongst his books, and the rest of the time his heart lived in an abstracted and sublime world of which few wives catch a glimpse, his wife least of all. He had, in fact, chosen like a student, the more at random because his former life had been of 'a well-governed and wise appetite.' Equally like a man of the closet, he resented her flight, being the more irritated because the world's ways were unknown to him. Without dread of ridicule, and with the sternness of a speculative man suddenly in collision with actual life, he wrote treatises on *Divorce*, signed them with his name, dedicated them to Parliament, held himself divorced, *de facto* because his wife refused to return, *de jure* because he had four texts of Scripture for it; whereupon he paid court to a young lady, and suddenly, seeing his wife on her knees and weeping, forgave her, took her back, renewed the dry and sad marriage-tie, not profiting by experience, but on the other hand fated to contract two other unions, the last with a wife thirty years younger than himself. Other parts of his domestic life were neither better managed nor happier. He had taken his daughters for secretaries, and made them read languages which they did not understand,—a repelling task, of which they bitterly complained. In return, he accused them of being 'undutiful and unkind,' of neglecting him, not caring whether they left him alone, of conspiring with the servants to rob him in their purchases, of stealing his books, so that they would have disposed of the whole of them. Mary, the second, hearing one day that he was going to be married, said that his marriage was no news; the best news would be his death. An incredible speech, and one which throws a strange light on the miseries of this family. Neither circumstances nor nature had created him for happiness.

III.

They had created him for strife, and from his return to England he had thrown himself heartily into it, armed with logic, indignation, and learning, protected by conviction and conscience. When 'the liberty of speech was no longer subject to control all mouths began to be opened against the bishops. . . . I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition; . . . and as I had from my youth studied the distinction between religious and civil rights, . . . I determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object.'[1] And thereupon he wrote his *Reformation in England*,[2] jeering at and attacking with

[1] *Second Defence of the People of England*, i. 257.

[2] In 1641. *Of Reformation in England, and the Causes that hitherto have*

haughtiness and scorn the prelacy and its defenders. Refuted and attacked in turn, he doubled his bitterness, and crushed those whom he had beaten. Transported to the limits of his creed, and like a knight making a rush, and who pierces with a dash the whole line of battle, he hurled himself upon the prince, concluded the abolition of Royalty as well as the overthrow of the Episcopacy; and one month after the death of Charles I., justified his execution, replied to the *Eikon Basilike*, then to Salmasius' *Defence of the King*, with incomparable breadth of style and scorn, like a soldier, like an apostle, like a man who everywhere feels the superiority of his science and logic, who wishes to make it felt, who proudly treads down and crushes his adversaries as ignoramuses, inferior minds, base hearts.[1] 'Kings most commonly,' he says, at the beginning of the *Eikonoklastes*,[2] 'though strong in legions, are but weak at argument; as they who ever have accustomed from their cradle to use their will only as their right hand, their reason always as their left. Whence unexpectedly constrained to that kind of combat, they prove but weak and puny adversaries.' Yet, for love of those who suffer themselves to be overcome by this dazzling name of royalty, he consents to 'take up King Charles' gauntlet,' and bangs him with it in a style calculated to make the imprudent ones who had thrown it down, repent. Far from recoiling at the accusation of murder, he accepts and boasts of it. He vaunts the regicide, sets it on a triumphal car, decks it in all the light of heaven. He relates with the tone of a judge, 'how a most potent king, after he had trampled upon the laws of the nation, and given a shock to its religion, and began to rule at his own will and pleasure, was at last subdued in the field by his own subjects, who had undergone a long slavery under him; how afterwards he was cast into prison, and when he gave no ground, either by words or actions, to hope better things of him, was finally by the supreme council of the kingdom condemned to die, and beheaded before the very gates of the royal palace. . . . For what king's majesty sitting upon an exalted throne, ever shone so brightly, as that of the people of England then did, when, shaking off that old superstition, which had prevailed a long time, they gave judgment upon the king himself, or rather upon an enemy who had been their king, caught as it were in a net by his own laws, (who alone of all mortals challenged to himself impunity by a divine right,) and scrupled not to inflict the same punishment upon him, being guilty, which he would have inflicted upon any other?'[3] After having justi-

hindered it. A Treatise of Prelatical Episcopacy. The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy. Apology for Smectymnuus.

[1] *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Eikonoklastes. Defensio Populi Anglicani. Defensio-Secunda. Authoris pro se defensio. Responsio.*

[2] Milton's *Works*, vol. i. p. 308.

[3] Preface to the *Defence of the People of England*, i. p. 3.

fied the execution, he sanctified it; consecrated it by decrees of heaven when he had authorised it by the laws of the world; from the support of Law he transferred it to the support of God. This is the God who 'uses to throw down proud and unruly kings, . . . and utterly to extirpate them and all their family. By his manifest impulse being set at work to recover our almost lost liberty, following him as our guide, and adoring the impresses of his divine power manifested upon all occasions, we went on in no obscure but an illustrious passage, pointed out and made plain to us by God himself.'[1] Here the reasoning ends with a song of triumph, and enthusiasm breaks out through the mail of the warrior. Such he displayed himself in all his actions and in all his doctrines. The solid files of bristling and well-ordered arguments which he disposed in battle-array were changed in his heart in the moment of triumph into glorious processions of crowned and resplendent hymns. He was transported by them, even to self-illusion, and lived thus alone with the sublime, like a warrior-pontiff, who in his stiff armour, or his glittering stole, stands face to face with truth. Thus absorbed in strife and in his priesthood, he lived out of the world, as blind to palpable facts as he was protected against the seductions of the senses, placed above the stains and the lessons of experience, as incapable of leading men as of yielding to them. There was nothing in him akin to the devices and delays of the statesman, the crafty schemer, who pauses on his way, experimentalises, with eyes fixed on what may turn up, who gauges what is possible, and employs logic for practical purposes. He was speculative and chimerical. Locked up in his own ideas, he sees but them, is attracted but by them. Is he pleading against the bishops? He would extirpate them at once, without hesitation; he demands that the Presbyterian worship shall be at once established, without forethought, contrivance, hesitation. It is the command of God, it is the duty of every faithful man; beware how you trifle with God or temporise with faith. Concord,

[1] *Defence*, i. 4. This defence is in Latin. Milton ends the *Defence* thus:—'He (God) has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, from the two greatest mischiefs of this life, and most pernicious to virtue, tyranny and superstition; he has endued you with greatness of mind to be the first of mankind, who after having conquered their own king, and having had him delivered into their hands, have not scrupled to condemn him judicially, and, pursuant to that sentence of condemnation, to put him to death. After the performing so glorious an action as this, you ought to do nothing that is mean and little, not so much as to think of, much less to do, anything but what is great and sublime. Which to attain to, this is your only way; as you have subdued your enemies in the field so to make appear, that unarmed, and in the highest outward peace and tranquillity, you of all mankind are best able to subdue ambition, avarice, the love of riches, and can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt to introduce, (which generally subdue and triumph over other nations,) to shew as great justice, temperance, and moderation in the maintaining your liberty, as you have shewn courage in freeing yourselves from slavery.'

gentleness, liberty, piety, he sees a whole swarm of virtues issue from this new worship. Let the king fear nothing from it, his power will be all the stronger. Twenty thousand democratic assemblies will take care that his rights be not infringed. These ideas make us smile. We recognise the party-man, who, on the verge of the Restoration, when 'the whole multitude was mad with desire for a king,' published *A Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*, and described his method at length. We recognise the theologian who, to obtain a law of divorce, only appealed to Scripture, and aimed at transforming the civil constitution of a people by changing the accepted sense of a verse. With closed eyes, sacred text in hand, he advances from consequence to consequence, trampling upon the prejudices, inclinations, habits, wants of men, as if a reasoning or religious spirit were the whole man, as if evidence always created belief, as if belief always resulted in practice, as if, in the struggle of doctrines, truth or justice gave doctrines the victory and sovereignty. To cap all, he sketched out a treatise on education, in which he proposed to teach each pupil every science, every art, and, what is more, every virtue. 'He who had the art and proper eloquence . . . might in a short space gain them to an incredible diligence and courage, . . . infusing into their young breasts such an ingenuous and noble ardour as would not fail to make many of them renowned and matchless men.' Milton had taught for many years and at various times. To retain such deceptions after such experiences, one must be insensible to experience or doomed to illusions.

But his obstinacy constituted his power, and the inner constitution, which closed his mind to instruction, armed his heart against weaknesses. With men generally, the source of devotion dries up when in contact with life. Gradually, by dint of frequenting the world, we come to acquire its tone. We do not choose to be dupes, and to abstain from the liberty which others allow themselves; we relax our youthful strictness; we even smile, attributing it to our heat of blood; we come to know our own motives, and cease to find ourselves sublime. We end by taking it calmly, and we see the world wag, only trying to avoid shocks, picking up here and there a few little harmless pleasures. Not so Milton. He lived complete and untainted to the end, without loss of heart or weakness; experience could not instruct nor misfortune depress him; he endured all, and repented of nothing. He lost his sight, willingly, by writing, though ill, and against the prohibition of his doctors, to justify the English people against the invectives of Salmasius. He saw the funeral of the Republic, the proscription of his doctrines, the defamation of his honour. Around him rioted the disgust of liberty, the enthusiasm of slavery. A whole people threw itself at the feet of a young incapable and treacherous libertine. The glorious leaders of the Puritan faith were condemned, executed, cut down alive from the gallows, quartered amidst insults; others, whom death had saved from the hangman, were dug up and exposed on the gibbet;

others, exiles in foreign lands, lived under the menaces and outrages of royalist arms; others again, more unfortunate, had sold their cause for money and titles, and sat amid the executioners of their former friends. The most pious and austere citizens of England filled the prisons, or wandered in poverty and opprobrium; and gross vice, shamelessly seated on the throne, stirred up around it the riot of unbridled licentious lusts and sensualities. Milton himself had been constrained to hide; his books had been burned by the hand of the hangman; even after the general act of indemnity he was imprisoned; when set at liberty, he lived in the expectancy of assassination, for private fanaticism might seize the weapon relinquished by public revenge. Other smaller misfortunes came to aggravate by their stings the great wounds which afflicted them. Confiscations, a bankruptcy, finally, the great fire of London, had robbed him of three-fourths of his fortune;[1] his daughters neither esteemed nor respected him; he sold his books, knowing that his family could not profit by them after his death; and amidst so many private and public miseries, he continued calm. Instead of repudiating what he had done, he gloried in it; instead of being cast down, he increased in firmness. He says, in his 17th sonnet:

'Cyriack, this three years day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content though blind, had I no better guide.'[2]

That thought was indeed his guide; he was 'armed in himself, and that 'breastplate of diamond'[3] which had protected the strong man against the wounds in battle, protected the old man against the temptations and doubts of defeat and adversity.

IV.

Milton lived in a small house in London, or in the country, in Buck-

[1] A scrivener caused him to lose £2000. At the Restoration he was refused payment of £2000 which he had put into the Excise Office, and deprived of an estate of £50 a year, bought by him from the property of the Chapter of Westminster. His house was burnt in the great fire. When he died he only left £1500, including the produce of his library.

[2] 1552, Milton's *Poetical Works*, ed. Cleveland, 1865, *Sonnet* 17.

[3] *Italian Sonnets.*

nghamshire, at the foot of a high green hill, published his *History of Britain*, his *Logic*, a *Treatise on True Religion and Heresy*, meditated his great *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. Of all consolations, work is the most fortifying and the most healthy, because it solaces a man not by bringing him ease, but by requiring efforts. Every morning he had a chapter of the Bible read to him in Hebrew, and remained for some time in silence, grave, in order to meditate on what he had heard. He never went to a place of worship. Independent in religion as in all else, he was sufficient to himself; finding in no sect the marks of the true church, he prayed to God alone, without needing others' help. He studied till mid-day; then, after an hour's exercise, he played the organ or the bass-violin. Then he resumed his studies till six, and in the evening enjoyed the society of his friends. When any one came to visit him, he was usually found in a room hung with old green hangings, seated in an arm-chair, and dressed quietly in black; his complexion was pale, says one of his visitors, but not sallow; his hands and feet were gouty; his hair, of a light brown, was parted in the midst, and fell in long curls; his eyes, grey and clear, showed no sign of blindness. He had been very beautiful in his youth, and his English cheeks, once delicate as a young girl's, retained their colour almost to the end. His face, we are told, was pleasing; his straight and manly gait bore witness to intrepidity and courage. Something great and proud breathes out yet from all his portraits; and certainly few men have done such honour to their kind. Thus expired this noble life, like a setting sun, bright and calm. Amid so many trials, a pure and lofty joy, altogether worthy of him, had been granted to him: the poet, buried under the Puritan, had reappeared, more sublime than ever, to give to Christianity its second Homer. The dazzling dreams of his youth and the reminiscences of his ripe age were found in him, side by side with Calvinistic dogmas and the visions of John, to create the Protestant epic of damnation and grace; and the vastness of primitive horizons, the flames of the infernal dungeon, the splendours of the celestial court, opened to the inner eye of the soul unknown regions beyond the sights which the eyes of flesh had lost.

V.

I have before me the formidable volume in which, some time after Milton's death, his prose works were collected.[1] What a book! The chairs creak when you place it upon them, and a man who had turned its leaves over for an hour, would have less pain in his head than in

[1] The titles of Milton's chief writings in prose are these: —*History of Reformation; The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy: Animadversions upon the Remonstrants' Defence; Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; Tetrachordon; Tractate on Education; Areopagitica; Tenure of Kings and Magistrates; Eikonoklastes; History of Britain; Thesaurus Linguæ Latinæ; History of Moscovia; De Logicæ Arte.*

his arm. As the book, so were the men: from the mere outsides we might gather some notion of the controversialists and theologians whose doctrines they contain. Yet we must conclude that the author was eminently learned, elegant, travelled, philosophic, and of high worldly culture for the times. We think involuntarily of the portraits of the theologians of the age, severe faces engraved on steel by the hard tool of masters, whose square brows and steady eyes stand out in startling prominence against the black oak panel. We compare them to modern countenances, in which the delicate and complex features seem to shudder at the alternate contact of hardly begun sensations and innumerable ideas. We try to imagine the heavy Latin education, the physical exercises, the rude treatment, the rare ideas, the imposed dogmas, which once occupied, oppressed, fortified, and hardened the young; and we might fancy ourselves looking at an anatomy of megatheria and mastodons, reconstructed by Cuvier.

The race of living men is changed. Our mind fails us now-a-days at the idea of this greatness and this barbarism; but we discover that barbarism was then the cause of greatness. As in other times we might have seen, in the primitive slime and among the colossal ferns, ponderous monsters slowly wind their scaly backs, and tear the flesh from one another's sides with their misshapen talons; so now, at a distance, from the height of our calm civilisation, we see the battles of the theologians, who, armed with syllogisms, bristling with texts, covered one another with filth, and laboured to devour each other.

Milton fought in the front rank, pre-ordained to barbarism and greatness by his individual nature and surrounding manners, capable of displaying in high prominence the logic, style, and spirit of his age. It is drawing-room life which trims men into shape: the society of ladies, the lack of serious interests, idleness, vanity, security, are needed to bring men to elegance, urbanity, fine and light humour, to teach the desire to please, the fear to become wearisome, a perfect clearness, a finished precision, the art of insensible transitions and delicate tact, the taste for suitable images, continual ease, and choice diversity. Seek nothing like this in Milton. The old scholastic system was not far off; it still weighed on those who were destroying it. Under this secular armour discussion proceeded pedantically, with measured steps. The first thing was to propound a thesis; and Milton writes, in large characters, at the head of his *Treatise on Divorce*, 'that indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangeable, hindering, and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugal society, which are solace and peace, is a greater reason of divorce than natural frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutual consent.' And then follow, legion after legion, the disciplined army of the arguments. Battalion after battalion they pass by, numbered very distinctly. There is a dozen of them together, each with its title in clear characters, and the little brigade of sub-

divisions which it commands. Sacred texts hold the post of honour They are discussed word by word, the substantive after the adjective, the verb after the substantive, the preposition after the verb; interpretations, authorities, illustrations, are summoned up, and ranged between palisades of new divisions. And yet there is a lack of order the question is not reduced to a single idea; we cannot see our way; proofs succeed proofs without logical sequence; we are rather tired out than convinced. We remember that the author speaks to Oxford men, lay or cleric, trained in pretended discussions, capable of obstinate attention, accustomed to digest indigestible books. They are at home in this thorny thicket of scholastic brambles; they beat a path through, somewhat at hazard, hardened against the hurts which repulse us, and not giving a thought to the daylight which we require.

With such ponderous reasoners, you must not look for wit. Wit is the nimbleness of victorious reason: here, because all is powerful, all is heavy. When Milton wishes to joke, he looks like one of Cromwell's pikemen, who, entering a room to dance, should fall upon the floor, and that with the extra momentum of his armour. Few things could be more stupid than his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants' Defence.* At the end of an argument his adversary concludes with this specimen of theological wit: 'In the meanwhile see, brethren, how you have with Simon fished all night, and caught nothing.' And Milton boastfully replies: 'If we, fishing with Simon the apostle, can catch nothing, see what you can catch with Simon Magus; for all his hooks and fishing implements he bequeathed among you.' Here a great savage laugh would break out. The spectators saw a charm in this way of insinuating that his adversary was simoniacal. A little before, the latter says: 'Tell me, is this liturgy good or evil?' Answer: 'It is evil. Repair the acheloian horn of your dilemma, how you can, against the next push.' The doctors wondered at the fine mythological simile, and rejoiced to see the adversary so neatly compared to an ox, a beaten ox, a pagan ox. On the next page the Remonstrant said, by way of a spiritual and mocking reproach: 'Truly, brethren, you have not well taken the height of the pole.' Answer: 'No marvel; there be many more that do not take well the height of your pole, but will take better the declination of your altitude.' Three quips of the same savour follow one upon the other; all this looked pretty. Elsewhere, Salmasius exclaiming 'that the sun itself never beheld a more outrageous action' than the murder of the king, Milton cleverly answers, 'The sun has beheld many things that blind Bernard never saw. But we are content you should mention the sun over and over. And it will be a piece of prudence in you so to do. For though our wickedness does not require it, the coldness of the defence that you are making does.'[1] The marvellous heaviness of these conceits betrays spirits yet entangled in the

[1] *A Defence of the People of England*, ch. i 20.

swaddling-clothes of learning. The Reformation was the inauguration of free thought, but only the inauguration. Criticism was still unborn, authority still presses with a full half of its weight upon the most enfranchised and bold minds. Milton, to prove that it was lawful to put a king to death, quotes Orestes, the laws of Publicola, and the death of Nero. His *History of Britain* is a farrago of all the traditions and fables. Under every circumstance he adduces a text of Scripture for proof; his boldness consists in showing himself a rash grammarian, a valorous commentator. He is blindly Protestant, as others were blindly Catholic. He leaves in its bondage the higher reason, the mother of principles; he has but emancipated a subordinate reason, an interpreter of texts. Like the vast half shapeless creatures, the birth of early times, he is yet but half man and half mud.

Can we expect urbanity here? Urbanity is the elegant dignity which answers insult by calm irony, and respects man whilst piercing a dogma. Milton coarsely knocks his adversary down. A bristling pedant, born from a Greek lexicon and a Syriac grammar, Salmasius had disgorged upon the English people a vocabulary of insults and a folio of quotations. Milton replies to him in the same style; calling him a buffoon, a mountebank, '*professor triobolaris*,' a hired pedant, a nobody, a rogue, a heartless being, a wretch, an idiot, sacrilegious, a slave worthy of rods and a pitchfork. A dictionary of big Latin words passed between them. 'You, who know so many tongues, who read so many books, who write so much about them, you are yet but an ass.' Finding the epithet good, he repeats and sanctifies it. 'O most drivelling of asses, you come ridden by a woman, with the cured heads of bishops whom you had wounded, a little image of the great beast of the Apocalypse!' He ends by calling him savage beast, apostate, and devil. 'Doubt not that you are reserved for the same end as Judas, and that, driven by despair rather than repentance, self-disgusted, you must one day hang yourself, and like your rival, burst asunder in your belly.'[1] We fancy we are listening to the bellowing of two bulls.

They had all a bull's ferocity. Milton hated heartily. He fought with his pen, as the Ironsides with the sword, foot to foot, with a concentrated rancour and a fierce obstinacy. The bishops and the king then suffered for eleven years of despotism. Each one recalled the banishments, confiscations, punishments, the law violated systematically and relentlessly, the liberty of the subject attacked by a well-laid

[1] Salmasius said of the death of the king: 'Horribilis nuntius aures nostras atroci vulnere, sed magis mentes perculit.' Milton replied: 'Profecto nuntius iste horribilis aut gladium multo longiorem eo quem strinxit Petrus habuerit oportet, aut aures istæ auritissimæ fuerint, quas tam longinquo vulnere perculerit.'

'Oratorem tam insipidum et insulium ut ne ex lacrymis quidem ejus mica salis exiguissima possit exprimi.'

Salmasius nova quadam metamorphosi salmacis factus est.'

plot, Episcopal idolatry imposed on Christian consciences, the faithful preachers driven into the wilds of America, or given up to the executioner and the stocks.[1] Such reminiscences, arising in powerful minds, stamped them with inexpiable hatred, and the writings of Milton bear witness to an acerbity which is now unknown. The impression left by his *Eikonoklastes*[2] is oppressive. Phrase by phrase, harshly, bitterly, the king is refuted and accused to the last, without a minute's respite of accusation, the accused being credited with not the slightest good intention, the slightest excuse, the least show of justice, the accuser never for an instant digressing to or resting upon a general idea. It is a hand-to-hand fight, where every word is a blow, prolonged, obstinate, without dash and without weakness, of a harsh and fixed hostility, where the only thought is how to wound most severely and to kill surely. Against the bishops, who were alive and powerful, his hatred flowed more violently still, and the fierceness of his envenomed metaphors hardly suffices to express it. Milton points to them 'basking in

[1] I copy from Neal's *History of the Puritans*, ii. ch. vii. 367, one of these sorrows and complaints. By the greatness of the outrage the reader can judge of the intensity of hatred:—

'The humble petition of (Dr.) Alexander Leighton, Prisoner in the Fleet,—

'Humbly sheweth,

'That on Feb. 17, 1630, he was apprehended coming from sermon by a high commission warrant, and dragged along the street with bills and staves to London-house. That the gaoler of Newgate being sent for, clapt him in irons, and carried him with a strong power into a loathsome and ruinous dog-hole, full of rats and mice, that had no light but a little grate, and the roof being uncovered, the snow and rain beat in upon him, having no bedding, nor place to make a fire, but the ruins of an old smoaky chimney. In this woeful place he was shut up for fifteen weeks, nobody being suffered to come near him, till at length his wife only was admitted. That the fourth day after his commitment the pursuivant, with a mighty multitude, came to his house to search for jesuits books, and used his wife in such a barbarous and inhuman manner as he is ashamed to express; that they rifled every person and place, holding a pistol to the breast of a child of five years old, threatening to kill him if he did not discover the books; that they broke open chests, presses, boxes, and carried away everything, even houshold stuff, apparel, arms, and other things; that at the end of fifteen weeks he was served with a subpœna, on an information laid against him by Sir Robert Heath, attorney-general, whose dealing with him was full of cruelty and deceit; but he was then sick, and, in the opinion of four physicians, thought to be poisoned, because all his hair and skin came off; that in the height of this sickness the cruel sentence was passed upon him mentioned in the year 1630, and executed Nov. 26 following, when he received thirty-six stripes upon his naked back with a threefold cord, his hands being tied to a stake, and then stood almost two hours in the pillory in the frost and snow, before he was branded in the face, his nose slit, and his ears cut off; that after this he was carried by water to the Fleet, and shut up in such a room that he was never well, and after eight years was turned into the common gaol.'

[2] Answer to the *Eikon Basilike*, a work in the king's favour, and attributed to the king.

the sunny warmth of wealth and protection,' like a brood of foul reptiles. 'The sour leaven of human traditions, mixed in one putrified mass with the poisonous dregs of hypocrisie in the heart of Prelates, . . . is the serpent's egg that will hatch an antichrist wheresoever, and ingender the same monster as big or little as the lump is which breeds him.'

So much coarseness and dulness was as an outer breastplate, the mark and the protection of the superabundant force and life which coursed in those athletic limbs and chests. Now-a-days, the mind being more refined, has become feebler; convictions, being less stern, have become less strong. The attention, delivered from the heavy scholastic logic and scriptural tyranny, is softer. The faith and the will, dissolved by universal tolerance and by the thousand opposing shocks of multiplied ideas, have engendered an exact and refined style, the instrument of conversation and pleasure, and have expelled the poetic and rude style, the weapon of war and enthusiasm. If we have effaced ferocity and folly, we have diminished force and greatness.

Force and greatness are manifested in Milton, displayed in his opinions and his style, the sources of his belief and his talent. This superb reason aspired to unfold itself without shackles; it demanded that reason might unfold itself without shackles. It claimed for humanity what it coveted for itself, and championed every liberty in his every work. From the first he attacked the corpulent bishops,[1] scholastic upstarts, persecutors of free discussion, pensioned tyrants of Christian conscience. Above the clamour of the Protestant Revolution, his voice was heard thundering against tradition and obedience. He sourly railed at the pedantic theologians, devoted worshippers of old texts, who took a mouldy martyrology for a solid argument, and answered a demonstration with a quotation. He declared that most of the Fathers were turbulent and babbling intriguers, that they were not worth more collectively than individually, that their councils were but a pack of underhand intrigues and vain disputes; he rejected their authority[2] and their example, and set up logic as the only interpreter of Scripture. A Puritan as against bishops, an Independent as against Presbyterians, he was always the master of his thought and the inventor of his own faith. No one better loved, practised, and praised the free and bold use of reason. He exercised it even rashly and scandalously. He revolted against custom, the illegitimate queen of human belief, the born and relentless enemy of truth, raised his hand against marriage, and demanded divorce in the case of contrariety of tempers. He declared that 'error supports custom, custom countenances error; and these two between them, . . . with the numerous and vulgar train of their followers, . . . envy and cry down the

[1] *Of Reformation in England*, ii.

[2] 'The loss of Cicero's works alone, or those of Livy, could not be repaired by all the Fathers of the church.'—*Areopagitica*.

industry of free reasoning, under the terms of humour and innovation.'[1] He showed that truth 'never comes into the world, but like a bastard, to the ignominy of him that brought her forth; till time, the midwife rather than the mother of truth, have washed and salted the infant, declared her legitimate.'[2] He held fast by three or four writings against the flood of blame and anathemas, and dared even more; he attacked before Parliament censure, its own work; he spoke as a man who is wounded and oppressed, for whom a public prohibition is a personal outrage, who is himself fettered by the fetters of the nation. He does not want the pen of a paid 'licenser' to insult by its approval the first page of his book. He hates this ignorant and imperious hand, and claims liberty of writing as he claims liberty of thought:—

'What advantage is it to be a man, over it is to be a boy at school, if we have only escaped the ferula, to come under the fescue of an imprimatur? if serious and elaborate writings, as if they were no more than the theme of a grammar-lad under his pedagogue, must not be uttered without the cursory eyes of a temporizing and extemporizing licenser? He who is not trusted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evil, and standing to the hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument to think himself reputed in the commonwealth wherein he was born for other than a fool or a foreigner. When a man writes to the world, he summons up all his reason and deliberation to assist him; he searches, meditates, is industrious, and likely consults and confers with his judicious friends; after all which done, he takes himself to be informed in what he writes, as well as any that wrote before him; if in this, the most consummate act of his fidelity and ripeness, no years, no industry, no former proof of his abilities, can bring him to that state of maturity, as not to be still mistrusted and suspected, unless he carry all his considerate diligence, all his midnight watchings, and expense of Palladian oil, to the hasty view of an unleisured licenser, perhaps much his younger, perhaps far his inferior in judgment, perhaps one who never knew the labour of book writing; and if he be not repulsed, or slighted, must appear in print like a puny with his guardian, and his censor's hand on the back of his title to be his bail and surety, that he is no idiot or seducer; it cannot be but a dishonour and derogation to the author, to the book, to the privilege and dignity of learning.'[3]

Throw open, then, all the doors; let there be light; let every man think, and bring his thoughts to the light. Dread not any divergence, rejoice in this great work; why insult the labourers by the name of schismatics and sectarians?

'Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries, as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men, who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world: neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay, rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties

[1] *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, iii. 172.
[2] *Ibid.* 173.
[3] *Areopagitica*, ii. 78.

and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.'[1]

Milton triumphs here through sympathy; he breaks forth into magnificent images, he displays in his style the force which he perceives around him and in himself. He lauds the Revolution, and his praises seem like the blast of a trumpet, to come from a brazen throat:—

'Behold now this vast city, a city of refuge, the mansion-house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with his protection; the shop of war has not there more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleagured truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation. . . . What could a man require more from a nation so pliant, and so prone to seek after knowledge? What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people, a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies?[2] . . . Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.'[3]

It is Milton who speaks, and it is Milton whom he unwittingly describes.

With a sincere writer, doctrines foretell the style. The sentiments and needs which form and govern his beliefs, construct and colour his phrases. The same genius leaves once and again the same impress, in the thought and in the form. The power of logic and enthusiasm which explains the opinions of Milton, explains his genius. The sectarian and the writer are one man, and we shall find the faculties of the sectarian in the talent of the writer.

When an idea is planted in a logical mind, it grows and fructifies there in a multitude of accessory and explanatory ideas which surround it, attached one to the others, and forming a thicket and a forest. The phrases in Milton are immense; page-long periods are necessary to enclose the train of so many linked arguments, and so many accumulated metaphors around the governing thought. In this great production, heart and imagination are shaken; Milton exults while he reasons, and the phrase comes as from a catapult, doubling the force of its flight by its heavy weight. I dare not place before a modern reader the gigantic periods which commence the treatise on the *Reformation in England*. We no longer possess this blast; we only understand little short phrases; we cannot fix our attention on the same point for a

[1] *Areopagitica*, ii. 92. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 91 [3] *Ibid.* ii. 94.

page at a time We require manageable ideas; we have disused the big two-handed sword of our fathers, and we only carry a light foil. I doubt, however, if the piercing phraseology of Voltaire be more mortal than the cleaving of this iron mass:—

'If in less noble and almost mechanick arts he is not esteemed to deserve the name of a compleat architect, an excellent painter, or the like, that bears not a generous mind above the peasantly regard of wages and hire, much more must we think him a most imperfect and incompleat divine, who is so far from being a contemner of filthy lucre, that his whole divinity is moulded and bred up in the beggarly and brutish hopes of a fat prebendary, deanery, or bishoprick.'

If Michael Angelo's prophets could speak, it would be in this style; and twenty times while reading it, we may discern the sculptor.

The powerful logic which lengthens the periods sustains the images. If Shakspeare and the masculine poets embrace a picture in the compass of a fleeting expression, break upon their metaphors with new ones, and exhibit successively in the same phrase the same idea in five or six forms, the abrupt motion of their winged imagination authorises or explains these varied colours and these mingling flashes. More connected and more master of himself, Milton develops to the end the threads which these poets break. All his images display themselves in little poems, a sort of solid allegory, all whose interdependent parts concentrate their light on the single idea which they are intended to embellish or demonstrate:—

'In this manner the prelates, . . . coming from a mean and plebeian life on a sudden to be lords of stately palaces, rich furniture, delicious fare, and princely attendance, thought the plain and homespun verity of Christ's gospel unfit any longer to hold their lordships' acquaintance, unless the poor threadbare matron were put into better clothes: her chaste and modest veil, surrounded with celestial beams, they overlaid with wanton tresses, and in a flaring tire bespeckled her with all the gaudy allurements of a whore.'[1]

Politicians reply that this gaudy church supports royalty.

'What greater debasement can there be to royal dignity, whose towering and steadfast height rests upon the unmovable foundations of justice, and heroic virtue, than to chain it in a dependence of subsisting, or ruining, to the painted battlements and gaudy rottenness of prelatry, which want but one puff of the king's to blow them down like a pasteboard house built of court-cards?'[2]

Metaphors thus sustained receive a singular breadth, pomp, and majesty. They are spread forth without clashing together, like the wide folds of a scarlet cloak, bathed in light and fringed with gold.

Do not take these metaphors for an accident. Milton lavishes them, like a priest who in his worship exhibits splendours and wins the eye, to gain the heart. He has been nourished by the reading of Spenser, Drayton, Shakspeare, Beaumont, all the most sparkling poets; and the golden flow of the preceding age, though impoverished all around him

[1] *Of Reformation in England*, ii. first book, 382.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. second book, 397.

and slackened in himself, has become enlarged like a lake through being dammed up in his heart. Like Shakspeare, he imagines at every turn, and even out of turn, and scandalises the classical and French taste.

'. . . As if they could make God earthly and fleshly, because they could not make themselves heavenly and spiritual; they began to draw down all the divine intercourse betwixt God and the soul, yea, the very shape of God himself, into an exterior and bodily form; . . . they hallowed it, they fumed up, they sprinkled it, they bedecked it, not in robes of pure innocency, but of pure linen, with other deformed and fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, and gewgaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the flamins vestry: then was the priest set to con his motions and his postures, his liturgies and his lurries, till the soul by this means of overbodying herself, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties, her pinions now broken, and flagging, shifted off from herself the labour of high soaring any more, forgot her heavenly flight, and left the dull and droiling carcase to plod on in the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity.'[1]

If we did not discern here the traces of theological coarseness, we might fancy we were reading an imitator of the *Phædo*, and under the fanatical anger recognise the images of Plato. There is one phrase which for manly beauty and enthusiasm recalls the tone of the *Republic*:—

'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered, unexercised and unbreathed virtue, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.'

But Milton is only Platonic by his richness and exaltation. For the rest, he is a man of the Renaissance, pedantic and harsh; he insults the Pope, who, after the gift of Pepin le Bref, 'never ceased baiting and goring the successors of his best lord Constantine, what by his barking curses and excommunications;'[2] he is mythological in his defence of the press, showing that formerly 'no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring.' It matters little: these learned, familiar, grand images, whatever they be, are powerful and natural.[3] Superabundance, like crudity, here only manifests the vigour and lyric dash which Milton's character had predicted.

Even passion follows; exaltation brings it with the images. Bold expressions, exaggeration of style, cause us to hear the vibrating voice of the suffering man, indignant and determined.

'For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred

[1] *Of Reformation in England*, ii. book first, p. 365.

[2] *Of Reformation in England*, ii. second book, 395.

[3] Whatsoever time, or the heedless hand of blind chance, hath drawn down from of old to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, those are the fathers. (*Of Prelatical Episcopacy* ii. 422.)

them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth: and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself; slays an immortality rather than a life.'[1]

This energy is sublime; the man is equal to the cause, and never did a loftier eloquence match a loftier truth. Terrible expressions overwhelm the book-tyrants, the profaners of thought, the assassins of liberty. 'The council of Trent and the Spanish inquisition, engendering together, brought forth or perfected those catalogues and expurging indexes, that rake through the entrails of many an old good author, with a violation worse than any that could be offered to his tomb.'[2] Similar expressions lash the carnal minds which believe without thinking, and make their servility into a religion. There is a passage which, by its bitter familiarity, recalls Swift, and surpasses him in all loftiness of imagination and genius:—

'A man may be an heretic in the truth, and if he believes things only because his pastor says so, . . . the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. . . . A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. . . . What does he therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs; some divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys, into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion. . . . So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual movable, and goes and comes near him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep; rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well-spiced bruage, and better breakfasted, . . . his religion walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion.'[3]

He condescended to mock for an instant, with what piercing irony you

[1] *Areopagitica*, ii. 55. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 60. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 85.

have seen. But irony, piercing as it may be, seems to him weak.[1] Hear him when he comes to himself, when he returns to open and serious invective, when after the carnal believer he overwhelms the carnal prelate:—

'The table of communion, now become a table of separation, stands like an exalted platform upon the brow of the quire, fortified with bulwark and barricado, to keep off the profane touch of the laics, whilst the obscene and surfeited priest scruples not to paw and mammoc the sacramental bread, as familiarly as his tavern biscuit.'[2]

He triumphs in believing that all these profanations are to be avenged. The horrible doctrine of Calvin has once more fixed men's gaze on the dogma of malediction and everlasting damnation. Hell in hand, Milton menaces; he is drunk with justice and vengeance amid the abysses which he opens, and the flames which he wields:—

'They shall be thrown eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of hell, where, under the despiteful controul, the trample and spurn of all the other damned, that in the anguish of their torture shall have no other ease than to exercice a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight for ever the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot, and down-trodded vassals of perdition.'

Fury here mounts to the sublime, and Michael Angelo's Christ is not more inexorable and vengeful.

Let us fill the measure; let us add, as he does, the prospects of heaven to the visions of darkness; the pamphlet becomes a hymn:—

'When I recall to mind at last, after so many dark ages, wherein the huge overshadowing train of error had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the church; how the bright and blissful Reformation (by divine power) struck through the black and settled night of ignorance and antichristian tyranny, methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears; and the sweet odour of the returning gospel imbathe his soul with the fragrancy of heaven.'[3]

Overloaded with ornaments, infinitely prolonged, these periods are triumphant choruses of angelic alleluias sung by deep voices to the accompaniment of ten thousand harps of gold. In the midst of his syllogisms, Milton prays, sustained by the accent of the prophets, surrounded by memories of the Bible, ravished with the splendours of the Apocalypse, but checked on the brink of hallucination by science and logic, in the summit of the calm clear atmosphere, without rising to the burning tracts where ecstasy dissolves the reason, with a majesty of

[1] When he is simply comic, he reaches, like Hogarth and Swift, a rude and farcical address. 'A bishop's foot that has all his toes (maugre the gout), and a linen sock over it, is the aptest emblem of the prelat himself; who, being a pluralist, may, under one surplice, hide four benefices, besides that great metropolitan toe.'

[2] *Of Reformation in England*, ii. 378.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. 366

eloquence and a solemn grandeur never surpassed, whose perfection proves that he has entered his domain, and gives promise of the poet beyond the prose-writer:—

'Thou, therefore, that sittest in light and glory unapproachable, parent of angels and men! next, thee I implore, omnipotent King, Redeemer of that lost remnant whose nature thou didst assume, ineffable and everlasting Love! and thou, the third subsistence of divine infinitude, illumining Spirit, the joy and solace of created things! one Tripersonal Godhead! look upon this thy poor and almost spent and expiring church. . . . O let them not bring about their damned designs, . . . to reinvolve us in that pitchy cloud of infernal darkness, where we shall never more see the sun of thy truth again, never hope for the cheerful dawn, never more hear the bird of morning sing.'[1]

'O Thou the ever-begotten Light and perfect Image of the Father, . . . Who is there that cannot trace thee now in thy beamy walk through the midst of thy sanctuary, amidst those golden candlesticks, which have long suffered a dimness amongst us through the violence of those that had seized them, and were more taken with the mention of their gold than of their starry light? . . . Come therefore, O thou that hast the seven stars in thy right hand, appoint thy chosen priests according to their orders and courses of old, to minister before thee, and duly to press and pour out the consecrated oil into thy holy and ever-burning lamps. Thou hast sent out the spirit of prayer upon thy servants over all the land to this effect, and stirred up their vows as the sound of many waters about thy throne. . . . O perfect and accomplish thy glorious acts! . . . Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth: put on the visible robes of thy imperial majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee; for now the voice of thy bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed.'[2]

This song of supplications and cheerfulness is an outpouring of splendours; and if you search all literature, you will hardly find poets equal to this writer of prose.

Is he truly a prose-writer? Entangled dialectics, a heavy and awkward mind, fanatical and ferocious provincialism, an epic grandeur of sustained and superabundant images, the blast and the temerities of implacable and all-powerful passion, the sublimity of religious and lyric exaltation: we do not recognise in these features a man born to explain, persuade, and prove. The scholasticism and grossness of the time have blunted or rusted his logic. Imagination and enthusiasm carried him away and enchained him in metaphor. Thus dazzled or marred, he could not produce a perfect work; he did but write useful tracts, called forth by practical interest and actual hate, and fine isolated morsels, inspired by collision with a grand idea, and by the momentary flight of genius. Yet, in all these abandoned fragments, the man shows in his entirety. The systematic and lyric spirit is manifested in the pamphlet as well as in the poem; the faculty of embracing general effects, and of being shaken by them, remains on an equality in Milton's

[1] *Of Reformation in England*, ii. 417. [2] *Animadversions*, etc., iii 71

two careers, and you will see in the *Paradise* and *Comus* what you have met with in the *Treatise on the Reformation*, and in the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*.

VI.

'Milton has acknowledged to me,' writes Dryden, 'that Spenser was his original.' In fact, by the purity and elevation of their morals, by the fulness and connection of their style, by the noble chivalric sentiments, and their fine classical arrangement, they are brothers. But he had yet other masters—Beaumont, Fletcher, Burton, Drummond, Ben Jonson, Shakspeare, the whole splendid English Renaissance, and behind it the Italian poesy, Latin antiquity, the fine Greek literature, and all the sources whence the English Renaissance sprang. He continued the great current, but in a manner of his own. He took their mythology, their allegories, sometimes their conceits,[1] and found the trick of their rich colouring, their magnificent sentiment of living nature, their inexhaustible admiration of forms and colours. But, at the same time, he transformed their diction, and employed poetry in a new service. He wrote, not by impulse, and at the mere contact with things, but like a man of letters, a classic, in a scholarlike manner, with the assistance of books, seeing objects as much through previous writings as in themselves, adding to his images the images of others, borrowing and re-casting their inventions, as an artist who unites and multiplies the bosses and driven gold, already entwined on a diadem by twenty workmen. He made thus for himself a composite and brilliant style, less natural than that of his precursors, less fit for effusions, less akin to the lively first glow of sensation, but more solid, more regular, more capable of concentrating in one large patch of light all their sparklings and splendours. He brings together, like Æschylus, words of 'six cubits,' plumed and decked in purple, and made them flow like a royal train before his idea, to exalt and announce it. He introduces to us

> 'The breathing roses of the wood,
> Fair silver buskin'd nymphs;'[2]

and tells how

> 'The gray-hooded Even,
> Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
> Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain;'[3]

and speaks of

> 'All the sea-girt isles,
> That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
> The unadorned bosom of the deep;'[4]

[1] See the *Hymn on the Nativity*; amongst others, the first few strophes. See also *Lycidas*.

[2] *Arcades*, *v.* 32. [3] *Comus*, *v.* 188–190. [4] *Ibid.* *v.* 21–23.

and

> 'That undisturbed song of pure concent,
> Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne,
> To Him that sits thereon,
> With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;
> Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
> Their loud-uplifted angel-trumpets blow.'[1]

He gathered into full nosegays the flowers scattered through the other poets:

> 'Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
> Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
> On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks;
> Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
> That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
> And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
> Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
> The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
> The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
> The glowing violet,
> The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
> With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
> And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
> Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
> And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
> To strew the laureat herse where Lycid lies.'[2]

When still quite young, on his quitting Cambridge, he inclined to the magnificent and grand; he wanted a great rolling verse, an ample and sounding strophe, vast periods of fourteen and four-and-twenty lines. He did not face objects on a level, as a mortal, but from on high, like those archangels of Goethe,[3] who embrace at a glance the whole ocean lashing its coasts, and the earth rolling on, wrapt in the harmony of the fraternal stars. It was not life that he felt, like the masters of the Renaissance, but greatness, like Æschylus, and the Hebrew seers,[4] manly and lyric spirits like his own, who, nourished like him in religious emotions and continuous enthusiasm, like him displayed sacerdotal pomp and majesty. To express such a sentiment, images, and poetry addressed only to the eyes, were not enough; sounds also were requisite, and that more introspective poetry which, purged from corporeal shows, could reach the soul: Milton was a musician; his hymns rolled with the slowness of a measured song and the gravity of a declamation; and he seems himself to be describing his art in these incomparable verses, which are evolved like the solemn harmony of a motett:

[1] *Ode at a Solemn Music*, v. 6–11. [2] *Lycidas*, v. 136–151.

[3] *Faust, Prolog im Himmel.*

[4] See the prophecy against Archbishop Laud in *Lycidas*, v. 130:

> 'But that two-handed engine at the door
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

'But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in musick lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear.' [1]

With his style, his subjects differed; he compacted and ennobled the poet's domain as well as his language, and consecrated his thoughts as well as his words. He who knows the true nature of poetry soon finds, as Milton said a little later, what despicable creatures 'libidinous and ignorant poetasters' are, and to what religious, glorious, splendid use poetry can be put in things divine and human. 'These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ.' [2]

In fact, from the first, at St. Paul's School and at Cambridge, he had written *Paraphrases of the Psalms*, then composed odes on the *Nativity*, *Circumcision*, and *Passion*. Presently appeared sad poems on the *Death of a Fair Infant*, *An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester;* then grave and noble verses *On Time*, *at a Solemn Musick*, a sonnet *On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three*, 'a late spring which shew'th no bud or blossom.' At last we have him in the country with his father, and the hopes, dreams, first enchantments of youth, rise from his heart like the morning breath of a summer's day! But what a distance between these calm and bright contemplations and the warm youth, the voluptuous *Adonis* of Shakspeare! He walked, used his eyes, listened; there his joys ended; they are but the poetic joys of the soul:

'To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise; . . .

[1] *Arcades. v.* 61–73.

[2] iii. *The Reason of Church Government*, book ii. Introduction, 479.

While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milk-maid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his sithe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.'[1]

To see the village dances and gaiety; to look upon the 'high triumphs and the 'busy hum of men' in the 'tower'd cities;' above all, to abandon himself to melody, to the divine roll of sweet verse, and the charming dreams which they spread before us in a golden light;—this is all; and presently, as if he had gone too far, to counterbalance this eulogy of sensuous joys, he summons Melancholy:

'Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestick train,
And sable stole of Cyprus lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait;
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes.'[2]

With her he wanders amidst grave thoughts and grave sights, which recall a man to his condition, and prepare him for his duties, now amongst the high colonnades of primeval trees, whose 'high-embowed roof' retains the silence and the twilight under their shade; now in

'The studious cloysters pale, . . .
With antick pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light;'[3]

now again in the retirement of the study, where the cricket chirps, where the lamp of labour shines, where the mind, alone with the noble minds of the past, may

'Unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.'[4]

He was filled with this lofty philosophy. Whatever the language he used, English, Italian, or Latin, whatever the kind of verse, sonnets, hymns, stanzas, tragedy or epic, he always returned to it. He praised above all chaste love, piety, generosity, heroic force. It was not from scruple, but it was innate in him; his chief need and faculty led him to noble conceptions. He took a delight in admiring, as Shakspeare in creat-

[1] *L'Allegro*, v. 41–68.
[2] *Il Penseroso*, v. 31–40.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 156–160.
[4] *Ibid.* v. 88–92.

ing, as Swift in destroying, as Byron in combating, as Spenser in dreaming. Even on ornamental poems, which were only employed to exhibit costumes and introduce fairy-tales, in Masques, like those of Ben Jonson, he impressed his own character. They were amusements for the castle; he made out of them lectures on magnanimity and constancy: one of them, *Comus*, well worked out, with a complete originality and extraordinary elevation of style, is perhaps his masterpiece, and is simply the eulogy of virtue.

Here we are in the heavens at the first dash. A spirit, descended in the midst of wild woods, repeats this ode:

> 'Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
> My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
> Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
> In regions mild of calm and serene air,
> Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
> Which men call earth; and, with low-thoughted care
> Confined, and pester'd in this pinfold here,
> Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
> Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
> After this mortal change, to her true servants,
> Amongst the enthroned Gods on sainted seats.'[1]

Such characters cannot speak; they sing. The drama is an antique opera, composed like the *Prometheus* of solemn hymns. The spectator is transported beyond the real world. He does not listen to men, but to sentiments. He assists at a concert, as in Shakspeare; the *Comus* continues the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, as a choir of deep men's voices continues the glowing and sad symphony of the instruments:

> 'Through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
> The nodding horrour of whose shady brows
> Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger,'[2]

strays a noble lady, separated from her two brothers, troubled by the savage cries and turbulent joy which she hears from afar. There the son of Circe the enchantress, sensual Comus, dances and shakes his torches amid the clamour of men transformed into brutes; it is the hour when

> 'The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
> Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
> And, on the tawny sands and shelves
> Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.'[3]

The lady is terrified, and sinks on her knees; and in the misty forms which float above in the pale light, perceives the mysterious and heavenly guardians who watch over her life and honour:

> 'O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith; white-handed Hope,
> Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings;

[1] *Comus*, v. 1–11. [2] *Ibid.* v. 37–39. [3] *Ibid.* v. 115–118.

And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err; there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.'[1]

She calls her brothers:

'At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air,[2]

across the 'violet-embroider'd vale,' to the dissolute god whom she enchants. He comes disguised as a 'gentle shepherd,' and says:

'Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine, enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention. . . .
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.'[3]

They were heavenly songs which Comus heard; Milton describes, and at the same time imitates them; he makes us understand the saying of his master Plato, that virtuous melodies teach virtue.

Circe's son has by deceit carried off the noble lady, and seats her, with 'nerves all chained up,' in a sumptuous palace before a table spread with all dainties. She accuses him, resists, insults him, and the style assumes an air of heroical indignation, to scorn the offer of the tempter.

'When lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,

[1] *Comus*, v. 213–225. [2] *Ibid.* v. 555–557. [3] *Ibid.* v. 244–264.

Lets in defilement to the inward parts;
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved.'[1]

Confounded, Comus pauses; and at the same instant the brothers, led by the attendant Spirit, cast themselves upon him with drawn swords. He flees, carrying off his magic wand. To deliver the enchanted lady, they summon Sabrina, the benevolent naiad, who sits

'Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy (her) amber-dropping hair.'[2]

The 'goddess of the silver lake' rises lightly from her 'coral-paven bed,' and her chariot 'of turkis blue and emerald-green,' sets her down

'By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow, and the osier dank.'[3]

Sprinkled by this chaste and cool hand, the lady leaves the 'venom'd seat' which held her spell-bound; the brothers, with their sister, reign peacefully in their father's palace; and the Spirit, who has conducted all, pronounces this ode, in which the poetry leads up to philosophy: the voluptuous light of an Oriental legend bathes the Elysium of the good, and all the splendours of nature assemble to add a seductiveness to virtue.

'To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing,
About the cedar'n alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow

[1] *Comus*, *v.* 463–473. It is the elder brother who utters these lines when speaking of his sister.—TR.

[2] *Ibid. v.* 861–863.

[3] *Ibid. v.* 890.

Flowers of more mingled hew
Than her purpled scarf can shew;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.'[1]

Should I have remarked on the awkwardnesses, strangenesses, overloaded expressions, the inheritance of the Renaissance, a philosophical question, the work of a reasoner and a Platonist? I have not perceived these faults. All was effaced before the spectacle of the bright Renaissance, transformed by austere philosophy, and of sublimity adored upon an altar of flowers.

That, I think, was his last profane poem. Already, in the one which followed, *Lycidas*, celebrating in the style of Virgil the death of a beloved friend,[2] he suffers the Puritan wrath and prejudices to shine through, inveighs against the bad teaching and tyranny of the bishops, and speaks of 'that two-handed engine at the door, ready to smite once, and smite no more.' On his return from Italy, controversy and action carried him away; prose begins, poetry is arrested. From time to time a patriotic or religious sonnet comes to break the long silence; now to praise the chief Puritans, Cromwell, Vane, Fairfax; now to celebrate the death of a pious lady, or the life of 'a virtuous young lady;' once to pray God 'to avenge his slaughter'd saints,' the

[1] *Comus*, v. 976–1023.

[2] Edward King, 1637.

unhappy Protestants of Piedmont, 'whose bones lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;' again, on his second wife, dead a year after their marriage, his well beloved 'saint'—'brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave, . . . came, vested all in white, pure as her mind;' loyal friendships, sorrows bowed to or subdued, aspirations generous or stoical, which reverses did but purify. Old age came; cut off from power, action, even hope, he returned to the great dreams of his youth. As of old, he went out of this low world in search of the sublime; for the actual is petty, and the familiar seems dull. He selects his new characters on the verge of sacred antiquity, as he selected his old ones on the verge of fabulous antiquity, because distance adds to their stature; and habit, ceasing to measure, ceases also to depreciate them. Just now we had creatures of fancy: Joy, daughter of Zephyr and Aurora; Melancholy, daughter of Vesta and Saturn; Comus, son of Circe, ivy-crowned, god of echoing woods and turbulent excess. Now, Samson, despiser of giants, elect of the strong god, exterminator of idolaters, Satan and his peers, Christ and his angels, come and rise before our eyes like superhuman statues; and their far removal, rendering vain our curious hands, will preserve our admiration and their majesty. Let us rise further and higher, to the origin of things, amongst eternal beings, to the commencement of thought and life, to the battles of God, in this unknown world where sentiments and existences, raised above the ken of man, elude his judgment and criticism to command his veneration and awe; let the sustained song of solemn verse unfold the actions of these shadowy figures: we shall experience the same emotion as in a cathedral, while the organ prolongs its reverberations among the arches, and through the dim light of the tapers the incense clouds envelope the colossal bulk of the columns.

But if the heart remains unchanged, the genius is transformed. Manliness has supplanted youth. The richness has decreased, the severity has increased. Seventeen years of fighting and misfortune have steeped his soul in religious ideas. Mythology has yielded to theology; the habit of discussion has ended by subduing the lyric flight; accumulated learning by choking the original genius. The poet no more sings sublime verse, he relates or harangues in grave verse. He no longer invents a personal style; he imitates antique tragedy or epic. In *Samson* he finds a cold and lofty tragedy, in *Paradise Regained* a cold and noble epic; he composes an imperfect and sublime poem in *Paradise Lost.*

Would he could have written it as he tried, in the shape of a drama, or better, as the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, as a lyric opera! Such and such a subject demands such and such a style; if you resist, you destroy your work, too happy if, in the deformed medley, chance produces and preserves a few beautiful fragments. To bring the supernatural upon the scene, you must not continue in your original mood; if you do, you have the air of not believing in it. Vision reveals it,

and the style of vision must express it. When Spenser writes, he dreams. We listen to the happy concerts of his aerial music, and the varying train of his fanciful apparitions unfolds like a vapour before our accommodating and dazzled gaze. When Dante writes, he is rapt, and his cries of anguish, his transports, the incoherent succession of his infernal or mystical phantoms, carry us with him into the invisible world which he describes. Ecstasy alone renders visible and credible the objects of ecstasy. If you tell us of the exploits of the Deity as you tell us of Cromwell's, in a grave and lofty tone, we do not see God; and as He constitutes the whole of your poem, we do not see anything. We conclude that you have accepted a tradition, that you adorn it with the fictions of your mind, that you are a preacher, not a prophet, a decorator, not a poet. We find that you sing of God as the vulgar pray to him, after a formula learnt, not from spontaneous emotion. Change your style, or, if you can, change your emotion. Try and discover in yourself the ancient fervour of psalmists and apostles, to recreate the divine legend, to feel over again the sublime motions by which the inspired and disturbed mind perceives God; then the grand lyric verse will roll on, laden with splendours. Thus roused, we shall not have to examine whether it be Adam or Messiah who speaks; we shall not have to demand that they shall be real, and constructed by the hand of a psychologist; we shall not trouble ourselves with their puerile or unlooked for actions; we shall be carried away, we shall share in your creative madness; we shall be drawn onward by the flow of bold images, or raised by the combination of gigantic metaphors; we shall be moved like Æschylus, when his thunder-stricken Prometheus hears the universal concert of streams, seas, forests, and created beings, lament with him,[1] as David before Jehovah, for whom a thousand years are but as yesterday, who 'carriest them away as with a flood; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.'[2]

But the age of metaphysical inspiration, long diverted, had not yet reappeared. Far in the past Dante was fading away; far in the future Goethe lay unrevealed. People saw not yet the pantheistic *Faust*, and the vague nature which absorbs all transformed existence in her deep bosom; they saw no longer the mystic paradise and immortal Love, whose ideal light envelopes souls redeemed. Protestantism had neither altered nor renewed divine nature; the guardian of an accepted creed and ancient tradition, it had only transformed ecclesiastical discipline

[1] ὦ δῖος αἰθὴρ καὶ ταχύπτεροι πνοαί
ποταμῶν τε πηγαί, ποντίων τε κυμάτων
ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, παμμῆτόρ τε γῆ,
καὶ τὸν πανόπτην κύκλον ἡλίου καλῶ,
ἴδεσθέ μ', οἷα πρὸς θεῶν πάσχω θεός.
Prometheus Vinctus, ed. Herman, p. 487 line 88.—Tr

[2] Ps. xc. 5.

and the doctrine of grace. It had only called the Christian to personal salvation and secular liberty. It had only remodelled man, it had not re-created the Deity. It could not produce a divine epic, but a human epic. It could not sing the battles and works of God, but the temptations and salvation of the soul. At the time of Christ came the poems of cosmogony; at the time of Milton, the confessions of psychology. At the time of Christ each imagination produced a hierarchy of supernatural beings, and a history of the world; at the time of Milton, every heart recorded the series of its upliftings, and the history of grace. Learning and reflection led Milton to a metaphysical poem which was not the natural offspring of the age, whilst inspiration and ignorance revealed to Bunyan the psychological narrative which suited the age, and the great man's genius was feebler than the tinker's simplicity.

And why? Milton's poem, suppressing lyrical illusion, admitted critical inquiry. Free from enthusiasm we judge his characters; we demand that they shall be living, real, complete, harmonious, like those of a novel or a drama. No longer hearing odes, we would see objects and souls: we ask that Adam and Eve should act in conformity with their primitive nature; that God, Satan, and Messiah should act and feel in conformity with their superhuman nature. Shakspeare would barely have discharged the task; Milton, the logician and reasoner, failed in it. He gives us correct solemn discourse, and gives us nothing more; his characters are speeches, and in their sentiments we find only heaps of puerilities and contradictions.

Adam and Eve, the first pair! I approach, and it seems as though I discovered the Adam and Eve of Raphael Sanzio, imitated by Milton, so his biographers tell us, glorious, strong, voluptuous children, naked in the light of heaven, motionless and absorbed before grand landscapes, with bright vacant eyes, with no more thought than the bull or the horse on the grass beside them. I listen, and I hear an English household, two reasoners of the period—Colonel Hutchinson and his wife. Heavens! dress them at once. Folk so cultivated should have invented before all a pair of trousers and modesty. What dialogues! Dissertations capped by politeness, mutual sermons concluded by bows. What bows! Philosophical compliments and moral smiles. I yielded, says Eve,

> 'And from that time see
> How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
> And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.'[1]

Dear learned poet, you would have been better satisfied if one of your three wives had, as an apt pupil, uttered to you by way of conclusion the above solid theoretical maxim. They did utter it to you; this is a scene from your own household:

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book iv. *v.* 489.

'So spake our general mother; and, with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreproved
And meek surrender, half-embracing lean'd
On our first father; half her swelling breast
Naked met his, under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid; he, in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms,
Smiled with superiour love, . . . and press'd her matron lip
With kisses pure.'[1]

This Adam entered Paradise *via* England. There he learned respectability, and there he studied moral speechifying. Let us hear this man before he has tasted of the tree of knowledge. A bachelor of arts, in his introductory address, could not utter more fitly and nobly a greater number of pithless sentences:

'Fair consort, the hour
Of night, and all things now retired to rest,
Mind us of like repose; since God hath set
Labour and rest, as day and night, to men
Successive; and the timely dew of sleep,
Now falling with soft slumbrous weight, inclines
Our eyelids; other creatures all day long
Rove idle, unemploy'd, and less need rest:
Man hath his daily work of body or mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways;
While other animals unactive range,
And of their doings God takes no account.'[2]

A very useful and excellent Puritanical exhortation! That is English virtue and morality; and at evening, in every family, it can be read to the children like the Bible. Adam is your true paterfamilias, with a vote, an M.P., an old Oxford man, consulted at need by his wife, dealing out to her with prudent measure the scientific explanations which she requires. This night, for instance, the poor lady had a bad dream, and Adam, in his trencher-cap, administers this learned psychological draught:[3]

'Know, that in the soul
Are many lesser faculties that serve
Reason as chief; among these Fancy next
Her office holds; of all external things,
Which the five watchful senses represent,
She forms imaginations, aery shapes
Which Reason, joining or disjoining, frames
All what we affirm or what deny, and call
Our knowledge or opinion. . . .

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book iv. *v.* 492-502.

[2] *Ibid. v.* 610-622.

[3] It would be impossible that a man so learned, so argumentative, should spend his whole time in gardening and making up nosegays.

Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes
To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes,
Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams;
Ill matching words and deeds long past or late.'[1]

Here was something to send Eve off to sleep again. Her husband, noting the effect, adds like an accredited casuist:

'Yet be not sad:
Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so unapproved; and leave
No spot or blame behind.'[2]

We recognise the Protestant husband, his wife's confessor. Next day comes an angel on a visit. Adam tells Eve:

'Go with speed,
And, what thy stores contain, bring forth, and pour
Abundance, fit to honour and receive
Our heavenly stranger . . . he
Beholding shall confess, that here on earth
God hath dispensed his bounties as in heaven.'[3]

Mark this becoming zeal of a hospitable lady. She goes in haste:

'What choice to choose for delicacy best;
What order, so contrived as not to mix
Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant; but bring
Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change.'[4]

She makes sweet wine, perry, creams; scatters flowers and leaves under the table. Good housewife! How many votes will she gain among the country squires, when Adam stands for Parliament! Adam belongs to the Opposition, is a Whig, a Puritan. He

'Walks forth; without more train
Accompanied than with his own complete
Perfections: in himself was all his state;
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
On princes, when their rich retinue long
Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold,
Dazzles the crowd.'[5]

The epic is changed into a political poem, and we have heard an epigram against power. The preliminary ceremonies are somewhat long; fortunately, the dishes being uncooked, 'no fear lest dinner cool.' The angel, though ethereal, eats like a Lincolnshire farmer:

'Nor seemingly
The angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
Of theologians; but with keen dispatch
Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
To transubstantiate: what redounds, transpires
Through spirits with ease.'[6]

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book v. *v.* 100–113. [2] *Ibid. v.* 116–119. [3] *Ibid. v.* 313–330.
[4] *Ibid. v.* 333–336. [5] *Ibid. v.* 351–357. [6] *Ibid. v.* 434–439.

At table Eve listens to the angel's stories, then discreetly rises at dessert, when they are getting into politics. English ladies may learn by her example to perceive from their lords' faces when they are 'entering on studious thoughts abstruse.' The sex does not mount so high. A wise lady prefers her husband's talk to that of strangers. 'Her husband the relater she preferred.' Now Adam hears a little treatise on astronomy. He concludes, like a practical Englishman:

> 'But to know
> That which before us lies in daily life,
> Is the prime wisdom: what is more, is fume,
> Or emptiness, or fond impertinence;
> And renders us, in things that most concern,
> Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek.' [1]

The angel gone, Eve, dissatisfied with her garden, wishes to have it improved, and proposes to her husband to work in it, she on one side, he on the other. He says, with an approving smile:

> 'Nothing lovelier can be found
> In woman, than to study household good,
> And good works in her husband to promote.' [2]

But he fears for her, and would keep her at his side. She rebels with a little prick of proud vanity, like a young lady who mayn't go out by herself. She has her way, goes, and eats the apple. Here interminable speeches come down on the reader, as numerous and cold as winter showers. The speeches of Parliament after Pride's Purge were hardly heavier. The serpent seduces Eve by a collection of arguments worthy of the punctilious Chillingworth, and then the syllogistic mist enters her poor brain:

> 'His forbidding
> Commends thee more, while it infers the good
> By thee communicated, and our want:
> For good unknown sure is not had; or, had
> And yet unknown, is as not had at all. . . .
> Such prohibitions bind not.' [3]

Eve is from Oxford too, has also learned law in the inns about the Temple, and wears, like her husband, the doctor's trencher-cap.

The flow of dissertations never pauses; from Paradise it gets into heaven: neither heaven nor earth, nor hell itself, would swamp it.

Of all characters which man could bring upon the scene, God is the finest. The cosmogonies of peoples are sublime poems, and the artists' genius does not attain perfection until it is sustained by such conceptions. The Hindoo sacred poems, the Biblical prophecies, the Edda, the Olympus of Hesiod and Homer, the visions of Dante, are glowing flowers from which a whole civilisation blooms, and every emotion

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book viii. *v.* 192–197.

[2] *Ibid* book ix. *v.* 232. [3] *Ibid. v.* 753–760.

vanishes before the lightning thought by which they have leapt from the bottom of our heart. Nothing then can be more depressing than the degradation of these noble ideas, settling into the regularity of formulas, and under the discipline of a popular worship. What is smaller than a god sunk to the level of a king and a man? what more repulsive than the Hebrew Jehovah, defined by theological pedantry, governed in his actions by the last manual of doctrine, petrified by literal interpretation?

Milton's Jehovah is a grave king, who maintains a suitable state, something like Charles I. When we meet him for the first time, in Book III., he is holding council, and setting forth a matter of business. From the style we see his grand furred cloak, his pointed Vandyke beard, his velvet-covered throne and golden dais. The business concerns a law which does not act well, and respecting which he desires to justify his rule. Adam is about to eat the apple: why have exposed Adam to the temptation? The royal orator discusses the question, and shows the reason:

'I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
Such I created all the ethereal powers
And spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd. . . .
Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love?
Where only, what they needs must do, appear'd,
Not what they would: what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid?
When will and reason, (reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not me. They therefore, as to right belong'd,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate;
As if predestination over-ruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge: they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.
So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass, authours to themselves in all,
Both what they judge and what they choose.'[1]

The modern reader is not so patient as the Thrones, Seraphim, and Dominations; this is why I stop half-way in the royal speech. We perceive that Milton's Jehovah is connected with the theologian James I., versed in the arguments of Arminians and Gomarists, very clever

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book iii. *v.* 98–123.

at the *distinguo*, and, before all, incomparably tedious. To get them to listen to such tirades he must pay his councillors of state very well. His son answers him respectfully in the same style. Goethe's God, half abstraction, half legend, source of calm oracles, a vision just beheld after a pyramid of ecstatic strophes,[1] greatly excels this Miltonic God, a business man, a schoolmaster, a man for show! I honour him too much in giving him these titles. He deserves a worse name, when he sends Raphael to warn Adam that Satan intends him some mischief:

> 'This let him know,
> Lest, wilfully transgressing, he pretend
> Surprisal, unadmonish'd, unforewarn'd.'[2]

This Miltonic Deity is only a schoolmaster, who, foreseeing the fault of his pupil, tells him beforehand the grammar rule, so as to have the pleasure of scolding him without discussion. Moreover, like a good politician, he had a second motive, just as with his angels, 'For state, as sovran king; and to inure our prompt obedience.' The word is out; we see what Milton's heaven is: a Whitehall filled with bedizened footmen. The angels are the chapel singers, whose business is to sing hymns about the king and before the king, relieving each other to sing 'melodious hymns about the sovran throne.' What a life for this poor king! and what a cruel condition, to hear eternally his own praises![3] To amuse himself, Milton's Deity decides to crown his son king—partner-king, if you prefer it. Read the passage, and say if it be not a ceremony of his time that the poet describes:

> 'Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,
> Standards and gonfalons 'twixt van and rear
> Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
> Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees;
> Or in their glittering tissues bear imblazed
> Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love
> Recorded eminent;'[4]

doubtless the capture of a Dutch vessel, the defeat of the Spaniards in the Downs. The king brings forward his son, 'anoints' him, declares him 'his great vicegerent:'

> 'To him shall bow
> All knees in heaven. . . . Him who disobeys,
> Me disobeys;'[5]

[1] End of the continuation of *Faust*. *Prologue in Heaven.*

[2] *Paradise Lost*, book v. *v.* 243.

[3] We are reminded of the history of Ira in Voltaire, condemned to hear without intermission or end the praises of four chamberlains, and the following hymn:

> 'Que son mérite est extrême!
> Que de grâces, que de grandeur.
> Ah! combien monseigneur
> Doit être content de lui-meme!'

[4] *Paradise Lost*, book v. *v.* 588–594.

[5] *Ibid. v.* 607–612.

and such were, in fact, expelled from heaven the same day. 'All seem'd well pleased; all seem'd, but were not all.' Yet

> 'That day, as other solemn days, they spent
> In song and dance about the sacred hill. . . .
> Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn
> Desirous.'[1]

Milton describes the tables, the dishes, the wine, the vessels. It is a popular festival; I miss the fireworks, the bell-ringing, as in London, and I can fancy that all would drink to the health of the new king. Then Satan revolts; he takes his troops to the other end of the country, like Lambert or Monk, toward 'the quarters of the north,' Scotland perhaps, passing through well-governed districts, 'empires,' with their sheriffs and lord-lieutenants. Heaven is divided like a good map. Satan holds forth before his officers against royalty, opposes in a word-combat the good royalist Abdiel, who refutes his 'blasphemous, false, and proud' arguments and quits him to rejoin his prince at Oxford. Well armed, the rebel marches with his pikemen and artillery to attack the fortress.[2] The two parties cut each other with the sword, mow each other down with cannon-balls, knock each other down with political arguments. These sorry angels have a mind as well disciplined as the Parliamentarians; they have passed their youth in a class of logic and in a drill school. Satan holds forth like a preacher:

> 'What heaven's Lord had powerfulest to send
> Against us from about his throne, and judged
> Sufficient to subdue us to his will,
> But proves not so: then fallible, it seems,
> Of future we may deem him, though till now
> Omniscient thought.'[3]

He also talks like a drill-sergeant. 'Vanguard, to right and left the front unfold.' He makes quips as clumsy as those of Harrison, the former butcher turned officer. What a heaven! It is enough to disgust one with Paradise; one would rather enter Charles I.'s troop of lackeys, or Cromwell's Ironsides. We have orders of the day, a hierarchy, exact submission, extra-duties, disputes, regulated ceremonials, prostrations, etiquette, furbished arms, arsenals, depots of chariots and ammunition. Was it worth while leaving earth to find in heaven carriage-works,

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book v. *v.* 617–631.

[2] The Miltonic Deity is so much on the level of a king and man, that he uses (with irony certainly) words like these: 'Lest unwary we love this place, our sanctuary, our hill.'

His son, about to flesh his maiden sword, replies: 'If I be found the worst in heaven,' etc.—Book vi.

[3] *Paradise Lost*, book vi. *v.* 425–420.

buildings, artillery, a manual of tactics, the art of salutations, and the Almanac de Gotha? Are these the things which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart to conceive?' What a gap between this monarchical frippery[1] and the visions of Dante, the souls floating like stars amid the harmonies, the mingled splendours, the mystic roses radiating and vanishing in the azure, the impalpable world in which all the laws of earthly life are dissolved, the unfathomable abyss traversed by fleeting visions, like golden bees gliding in the rays of the deep central sun! Is it not a sign of extinguished imagination, of the inroad of prose, of the birth of the practical genius, replacing metaphysics by morality? What a fall! To measure it, read a true Christian poem, the Apocalypse. I copy half-a-dozen verses; think what it has become in the hands of the imitator:

'And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

'And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

'His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

'And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

'And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

'And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.'[2]

When Milton was arranging his celestial show, he did not fall as dead.

But if the innate and inveterate habits of logical argument, joined with the literal theology of the time, prevented him from attaining to lyrical illusion or from creating living souls, the splendour of his grand imagination, joined with the Puritan passions, furnished him with an heroic character, several sublime hymns, and scenery which no one has surpassed. The finest thing in connection with this Paradise is hell; and in this history of God, the chief part is taken by the devil. The ridiculous devil of the middle-age, a horned enchanter, a dirty jester, a petty and mischievous ape, band-leader to a rabble of old women, has become a giant and a hero. Like a conquered and vanished Cromwell, he remains admired and obeyed by those whom he has drawn into the abyss. If he continues master, it is because he deserves it; firmer, more enterprising, more scheming than the rest, it is always

[1] When Raphael comes on earth, the angels who are 'under watch,' 'in honour rise.' The disagreeable and characteristic feature of this heaven is, that the universal motive is obedience, while in Dante's it is love. 'Lowly reverent they bow. . . . Our happy state we hold, like yours, while our obedience holds.'

[2] Rev. i. 12

from him that deep counsels, unlooked-for resources, courageous deeds, proceed. It was he who invented 'deep-throated engines . . . disgorging, . . . chained thunderbolts, and hail of iron globes,' and won the second day's victory; he who in hell roused his dejected troops, and planned the ruin of man; he who, passing the guarded gates and the endless chaos, amid so many dangers, and across so many obstacles, made man revolt against God, and gained for hell the whole posterity of the new-born. Though defeated, he prevails, since he has won from the monarch on high the third part of his angels, and almost all the sons of his Adam. Though wounded, he triumphs, for the thunder which smote his head, left his heart invincible. Though feebler in force, he remains superior in nobility, since he prefers suffering independence to happy servility, and welcomes his defeat and his torments as a glory, a liberty, and a joy. These are the proud and sombre political passions of the constant though oppressed Puritans; Milton had felt them in the vicissitudes of war, and the emigrants who had taken refuge amongst the panthers and savages of America, found them strong and energetic in the depths of their heart.

> Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
> Said then the lost Archangel, this the seat
> That we must change for heaven? this mournful gloom
> For that celestial light? Be it so, since he,
> Who now is Sovran, can dispose and bid
> What shall be right: farthest from him is best,
> Whom reason has equal'd, force hath made supreme
> Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrours; hail,
> Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,
> Receive thy new possessour; one who brings
> A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
> What matter where, if I be still the same,
> And what I should be; all but less than he
> Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
> We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
> Here for his envy; will not drive us hence:
> Here we may reign secure; and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
> Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.'[1]

This sombre heroism, this harsh obstinacy, this biting irony, these proud stiff arms which clasp grief as a mistress, this concentration of invincible courage which, cast on its own resources, finds everything in itself, this power of passion and sway over passion,—

> 'The unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book i. *v.* 242–263

And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome,'[1]

are features proper to the English character and to English literature, and you will find them later on in Byron's Lara and Conrad.

Around the fallen angel, as within him, all is great. Dante's hell is but a hall of tortures, whose cells, one below another, descend to the deepest wells. Milton's hell is vast and vague:

'A dungeon horrible on all sides round,
As one great furnace, flamed; yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades.[2] . . .
Beyond this flood a frozen continent
Lies, dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind, and dire hail which on firm land
Thaws not; but gathers heap, and ruin seems
Of ancient pile.'[3]

The angels gather, innumerable legions:

'As when heaven's fire
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath.'[4]

Milton needs the grand and infinite; he lavishes them. His eyes are only content in limitless space, and he produces colossuses to fill it. Such is Satan wallowing on the surges of the livid sea:

'In bulk as huge . . . as . . . that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream:
Him, haply, slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.'[5]

Spenser has discovered images just as fine, but he has not the tragic gravity which the idea of hell impresses on a Protestant. No poetic creation equals in horror and grandeur the spectacle that greeted Satan on leaving his dungeon:

At last appear
Hell bounds, high reaching to the horrid roof,
And thrice threefold the gates; three folds were brass,
Three iron, three of adamantine rock,
Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire,
Yet unconsumed. Before the gates there sat

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book i. *v.* 106–109.
[2] *Ibid.* *v.* 61–65.
[3] *Ibid.* book ii. *v.* 587–591.
[4] *Ibid.* book i. *v* 612–615.
[5] *Ibid.* *v.* 196–208.

On either side a formidable shape;
The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold
Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting: about her middle round
A cry of hell hounds never ceasing bark'd
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal: yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there; yet there still bark'd and howl'd
Within unseen. . . . The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either: black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart; what seem'd his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast,
With horrid strides; hell trembled as he strode.
The undaunted fiend what this might be admired,
Admired, not fear'd. [1]

The heroic glow of the old soldier of the Civil Wars animates the infernal battle; and if one were to ask why Milton creates things greater than other men, I should answer, because he has a greater heart.

Hence the sublimity of his scenery. If I did not fear the paradox, I should say that this scenery was a school of virtue. Spenser is a smooth glass, which fills us with calm images. Shakspeare is a burning mirror, which overpowers us, one after another, with multiplied and dazzling visions. The one distracts, the other disturbs us. Milton raises our mind. The force of the objects which he describes passes into us; we become great by sympathy with their greatness. Such is the effect of his description of the Creation. The calm and creative command of the Messiah leaves its trace in the heart which listens to it, and we feel more vigour and moral health at the sight of this great work of wisdom and will:

'On heavenly ground they stood; and from the shore
They view'd the vast immeasurable abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
Heaven's highth, and with the centre mix the pole.
"Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,"
Said then the omnific Word: "your discord end!" . . .
Let there be light, said God; and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep; and from her native east

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book ii. *v.* 643–978.

To journey through the aery gloom began,
Sphered in a radiant cloud. . . .
The earth was form'd; but in the womb as yet
Of waters, embryon immature involved,
Appear'd not: over all the face of earth
Main ocean flow'd, not idle; but, with warm
Prolific humour softening all her globe,
Fermented the great mother to conceive,
Satiate with genial moisture; when God said,
"Be gather'd now, ye waters under heaven,
Into one place, and let dry land appear."
Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters: thither they
Hasted with glad precipitance, uproll'd,
As drops on dust conglobing from the dry.'[1]

This is the primitive scenery; immense bare seas and mountains as Raphael Sanzio outlines them in the background of his biblical paintings. Milton embraces the general effects, and handles the whole as easily as his Jehovah.

Let us quit superhuman and fanciful spectacles. A simple sunset equals them. Milton peoples it with solemn allegories and regal figures, and the sublime is born in the poet, as just before it was born from the subject:—

'The sun, now fallen . . .
Arraying with reflected purple and gold
The clouds that on his western throne attend.
Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad:
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased: now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.'[2]

The changes of the light become here a religious procession of vague beings who fill the soul with veneration. So sanctified, the poet prays. Standing by the nuptial couch of Adam and Eve, he says:—

'Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else!

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book vii. v. 210-292. [2] *Ibid* book iv. v. 591-609.

> By thee adulterous lust was driven from men
> Among the bestial herds to range: by thee,
> Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
> Relations dear, and all the charities
> Of father, son, and brother, first were known.'[1]

He justifies it by the example of saints and patriarchs. He immolates before it bought love and 'court amours,' wanton women and harlots. We are a thousand miles from Shakspeare; and in this Protestant eulogy of the family tie, of lawful love, of 'domestic sweets,' of orderly piety and of home, we perceive a new literature and an altered time.

A strange great man, and a strange spectacle! He was born with the instinct of noble things; and this instinct, strengthened in him by solitary meditation, by accumulated knowledge, by stern logic, becomes changed into a body of maxims and beliefs which no temptation could dissolve, and no reverse shake. Thus fortified, he passes life as a combatant, as a poet, with courageous deeds and splendid dreams, heroic and rude, chimerical and impassioned, generous and calm, like every self-contained reasoner, like every enthusiast, insensible to experience and enamoured of the beautiful. Thrown by the chance of a revolution into politics and theology, he demands for others the liberty which his powerful reason requires, and strikes at the public fetters which impede his personal energy. By the force of his intellect, he is more capable than any one of accumulating science; by the force of his enthusiasm, he is more capable than any of experiencing hatred. Thus armed, he throws himself into controversy with all the clumsiness and barbarism of the time; but this proud logic displays its arguments with a marvellous breadth, and sustains its images with an unwonted majesty: this lofty imagination, after having spread over his prose an array of magnificent figures, carries him into a torrent of passion even to the height of the sublime or excited ode—a sort of archangel's song of adoration or vengeance. The chance of a throne preserved, then re-established, carries him, before the revolution took place, into pagan and moral poetry, after the revolution into Christian and moral verse. In both, he aims at the sublime, and inspires admiration: because the sublime is the work of enthusiastic reason, and admiration is the enthusiasm of reason. In both, he arrives at his point by the accumulation of splendours, by the sustained fulness of poetic song, by the greatness of his allegories, the loftiness of his sentiments, the description of infinite objects and heroic emotions. In the first, a lyrist and a philosopher, with a wider poetic freedom, and the creator of a stranger poetic illusion, he produces almost perfect odes and choruses. In the second, an epic writer and a Protestant, enslaved by a strict theology, robbed of the style which makes the supernatural

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book iv. *v.* 750–757.

visible, deprived of the dramatic sensibility which creates varied and living souls, he accumulates cold dissertations, transforms man and God into orthodox and vulgar machines, and only regains his genius in endowing Satan with his republican soul, in multiplying grand sceneries and colossal apparitions, in consecrating his poetry to the praise of religion and duty.

Placed, as it happened, between two ages, he participates in their two characters, as a stream which, flowing between two different soils, is tinged by their two hues. A poet and a Protestant, he receives from the closing age the free poetic afflatus, and from the opening age the severe political religion. He employed the one in the service of the other, and displayed the old inspiration in new subjects. In his works we recognise two Englands: one impassioned for the beautiful, devoted to the emotions of an unshackled sensibility and the fancies of pure imagination, with no law but the natural feelings, and no religion but natural belief; voluntarily pagan, often immoral; such as it is exhibited by Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakspeare, Spenser, and the superb harvest of poets which covered the ground for a space of fifty years: the other fortified by a practical religion, void of metaphysical invention, altogether political, with worship and law, attached to measured, sensible, useful, narrow opinions, praising the virtues of the family, armed and stiffened by a rigid morality, driven into prose, raised to the highest degree of power, wealth, and liberty. In this sense, this style and these ideas are monuments of history: they concentrate, recall, or anticipate the past and the future; and in the limits of a single work are found the events and the feelings of several centuries and of a whole nation.

BOOK III.

THE CLASSIC AGE.

CHAPTER I.

The Restoration.

1 The Roisterers.

I. The excesses of Puritanism—How they induce excesses of sensuality.

II. Picture of these manners by a stranger—The *Mémoires de Grammont*—Difference of debauchery in France and England.

III. Butler's *Hudibras*—Platitude of his comic style, and harshness of his rancorous style.

IV. Baseness, cruelty, brutality, debauchery of the court—Rochester, his life, poems, style, morals.

V. Philosophy consonant with these manners—Hobbes, his spirit and his style—His curtailments and his discoveries—His mathematical method—In how much he resembles Descartes—His morality, æsthetics, politics, logic, psychology, metaphysics—Spirit and aim of his philosophy.

VI. The theatre—Alteration in taste, and in the public—Audiences before and after the Restoration.

VII. Dryden—Disparity of his comedies—Gaucherie of his indecencies—How he translates Molière's *Amphitryon*.

VIII. Wycherley—Life—Character—Melancholy, greed, immodesty—*Love in a Wood, Country Wife, Dancing Master*—Licentious pictures and repugnant details—His energy and realism—Parts of Olivia and Manly in his *Plain Dealer*—Certain words of Milton.

2. The Worldlings.

I. Appearance of the worldly life in Europe—Its conditions and causes—How it was established in England—Etiquette, amusements, conversations, manners, and talents of the drawing-room.

II. Dawn of the classic spirit in Europe—Its origin—Its nature—Difference of conversation under Elizabeth and Charles II.

III. Sir William Temple—His life, character, spirit, and style.

IV. Writers of fashion—Their correct language and gallant bearing—Sir Charles Sedley, the Earl of Dorset, Edmund Waller—His opinions and style—

Wherein consists his polish—Wherein he is not sufficiently polished—Culture of style—Lack of poetry—Character of monarchical and classic style.

V. Sir John Denham—His poem of *Cooper's Hill*—Oratorical swell of his verse—English seriousness of his moral preoccupations—How people of fashion and literary men followed then the fashions of France.

VI. The comic-authors—Comparison of this theatre with that of Molière—Arrangement of ideas in Molière—General ideas in Molière—How with Molière the odious is concealed, while the truth is depicted—How in Molière the honest man is still the man of the world—How the honest man of Molière is a French type.

VII. Action—Complication of intrigues—Frivolity of purpose—Crudeness of the characters—Grossness of manners—Wherein consists the talent of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar—Kind of characters they are able to produce.

VIII. Natural characters—*Sir John Brute*, the husband; *Squire Sullen—Sir Tunbelly*, the father—*Miss Hoyden*, the young lady—*Squire Humphry*, the young gentleman—Idea of nature according to this theatre.

IX. Artificial characters—Women of the world—*Miss Prue, Lady Wishfort, Lady Pliant, Mrs Millamant*—Men of the world—*Mirabell*—Idea of society according to this theatre—Why this culture and this literature have not produced durable works—Wherein they are opposed to the English character—Transformation of taste and manners.

X. The continuation of comedy—Sheridan—Life—Talent—*The School for Scandal*—How comedy degenerates and is extinguished—Causes of the decay of the theatre in Europe and in England.

1. The Roisterers.

WHEN we alternately look at the works of the court painters of Charles I. and Charles II., and pass from the noble portraits of Van Dyk to the figures of Lely, the fall is sudden and great; we have left a palace, and we light on a bagnio.

Instead of the proud and dignified lords, at once cavaliers and courtiers, instead of those fine yet simple ladies who look at the same time princesses and modest maidens, instead of that generous and heroic company, elegant and resplendent, in whom the spirit of the Renaissance yet survived, but who already displayed the refinement of the modern age, we are confronted by perilous and importunate courtesans, with an expression either vile or harsh, incapable of shame or of remorse.[1] Their plump smooth hands toy fondlingly with their dimpled fingers; ringlets of heavy hair fall on their bare shoulders; their swimming eyes languish voluptuously; an insipid smile hovers on their sensual lips. One is lifting a mass of dishevelled hair which streams over the curves of her rosy flesh; another languishingly, and without constraint, uncloses a sleeve whose soft folds display the full whiteness of her arms. Nearly

[1] See especially the portraits of Lady Morland, Lady Williams, the Countess of Ossory, the Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Price, and many others.

all are half-draped; many of them seem to be just rising from their beds; the rumpled dressing-gown clings to the neck, and looks as though it were soiled by the night's debauch; the tumbled undergarment slips down to the hips: their feet crumple the bright and glossy silk. Though shameless, with bosoms uncovered, they are decked out in all the luxurious extravagance of prostitutes; diamond girdles, puffs of lace, the vulgar splendour of gilt, a superfluity of embroidered and rustling fabrics, enormous head-dresses, the curls and fringes of which, rolled up and sticking out, compel notice by the very height of their shameless magnificence. Folding curtains hang round them in the shape of an alcove, and the eyes penetrate through a vista into the recesses of a wide park, whose solitude will not ill serve the purpose of their pleasures.

I.

All this came by way of contrast; Puritanism had brought on an orgie, and fanatics had talked down the virtues. For many years the gloomy English imagination, possessed by religious terrors, had desolated the life of men. Conscience had become disturbed at the thought of death and the dark eternity; half-expressed doubts swarmed within like a bed of thorns, and the sick heart, starting at every emotion, had ended by taking a disgust at all its pleasures, and a horror at all its natural instincts. Thus poisoned at its spring, the divine sentiment of justice became a mournful madness. Man, confessedly perverse and condemned, believed himself pent in a prison-house of perdition and vice, into which no effort and no chance could dart a ray of light, except a hand from above should come by free grace, to rend the sealed stone of the tomb. Men lived the life of the condemned, amid torments and anguish, oppressed by a gloomy despair, haunted by spectres. Such a one would frequently imagine himself at the point of death; another was weighed down by his grievous hallucinations as by a cross; some would feel within them the motions of an evil spirit; one and all passed the night with their eyes chained to the tales of blood and the impassioned appeals of the Old Testament, listening to the threats and thunders of a terrible God, and renewing in their own hearts the ferocity of murderers and the exaltation of seers. Under such a strain reason gradually left them. While seeking after their Lord, they found but a dream. After long hours of exhaustion, they laboured under a warped and overwrought imagination. Dazzling forms, unwonted ideas, sprang up on a sudden in their heated brain; men were raised and penetrated by extraordinary emotions. So transformed, they knew themselves no longer; they did not ascribe to themselves these violent and sudden inspirations which were forced upon them, which compelled them out of the beaten tracks, which had no connection one with another, which shook and enlightened them when least expected, without being able either to check or to govern them; they saw in them the

agency of a supernatural power, and gave themselves up with enthusiasm to the madness and the stubbornness of faith.

To crown all, the nature of fanaticism had been changed; the sectary had laid down all the steps of mental transfiguration, and reduced the encroachment of his dream to a theory: he set about methodically to drive out reason and enthrone ecstasy. George Fox wrote its history, Bunyan gave it its laws, Parliament worked out its type, all the pulpits lauded its practice. Artisans, soldiers, women discussed it, mastered it, encouraged one another by the details of their experience and the publicity of their exaltations. A new life was inaugurated which had blighted and expelled the old. All secular tastes were suppressed, all sensual joys forbidden; the spiritual man alone remained standing upon the ruins of the past, and the heart, debarred from all its natural safety-valves, could only direct its views or aspirations towards a sinister Deity. The typical Puritan walked slowly along the streets, his eyes raised towards heaven, with elongated features, yellow and haggard, with cropt hair, clad in brown or black, unadorned, clothed only to cover his nakedness. If a man had round cheeks, he passed for lukewarm.[1] The whole body, the exterior, the very tone of his voice, all must wear the sign of penitence and divine grace. Man spoke slowly, with a solemn and somewhat nasal tone of voice, as if to destroy the vivacity of conversation and the melody of the natural voice. His speech stuffed with scriptural quotations, his style borrowed from the prophets, his name and the names of his children drawn from the Bible, bore witness that his thoughts were confined to the terrible world of the seers and ministers of divine vengeance. From within, the contagion spread outwards. The fears of conscience were converted into laws of the state. Personal asceticism grew into public tyranny. The Puritan proscribed pleasure as an enemy, for others as well as for himself. Parliament closed the gambling-houses and theatres, and had the actors whipped at the cart's tail; oaths were fined; the May-trees were cut down; the bears, whose fights amused the people, were put to death; the plaster of Puritan masons reduced nude statues to decency; the beautiful poetic festivals were forbidden. Fines and corporal punishments shut out, even from children, games, dancing, bell-ringing, rejoicings, junketings, wrestling, the chase, all exercises and amusements which might profane the Sabbath. The ornaments, pictures, and statues in the churches were pulled down or mutilated. The only pleasure which they retained and permitted was the singing of psalms through the nose, the edification of long sermons, the excitement of acrimonious controversies, the eager and sombre joy of a victory gained over the enemy of mankind, and of the tyranny exercised against the demon's supposed abettors. In Scotland, a colder and sterner land, intolerance reached the utmost limits of ferocity and

[1] Colonel Hutchinson was at one time held in suspicion because he wore long hair and dressed well.

pettiness, instituting a surveillance over the private life and the secret devotions of every member of a family, depriving Catholics of their children, imposing an oath of abjuration under pain of perpetual imprisonment or death, dragging crowds of witches[1] to the stake.[2] It seemed as though a black cloud had weighed down the life of man, drowning all light, wiping out all beauty, extinguishing all joy, pierced here and there by the glitter of the sword and by the flickering of torches, beneath which one might perceive the indistinct forms of gloomy despots, of bilious sectarians, of silent victims.

II.

The king once re-established, a deliverance ensued. Like a checked and flooded stream, public opinion dashed with all its natural force and all its acquired momentum, into the bed from which it had been debarred. The outburst carried away the dams. The violent return to the senses drowned morality. Virtue had the semblance of Puritanism. Duty and fanaticism became mingled in a common reproach. In this great reaction, devotion and honesty, swept away together, left to mankind but the wreck and the mire. The more excellent parts of human nature disappeared; there remained but the animal, without bridle or guide, urged by his desires beyond justice and shame.

When we see these manners in a Hamilton or a Saint Évremond, we can tolerate them. Their French varnish deceives us. Debauchery in a Frenchman is only half disgusting; with them, if the animal breaks loose, it is without abandoning itself to excess. The foundation is not,

[1] 1648; thirty in one day. One of them confessed that she had been at a gathering of more than five hundred witches.—*Pictorial History*, iii. 489.

[2] In 1652, the kirk-session of Glasgow 'brot boyes and servants before them, for breaking the Sabbath, and other faults. They had clandestine censors, and gave money to some for this end.'—Note 28, taken from *Wodrow's Collection;* Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 3 vols. 1867, iii. 208.

Even yearly in the eighteenth century, 'the most popular divines' in Scotland affirmed that Satan 'frequently appears clothed in a corporeal substance.'—*Ibid.* iii. 233, note 76, taken from *Memoirs of C. L. Lewes.*

'No husband shall kiss his wife, and no mother shall kiss her child on the Sabbath day.'—*Ibid.* iii. 253, note from Revd. Lyon, with regard to government of a colony.

'(Sept. 22, 1649) The quhilk day the Sessioune caused mak this act, that ther sould be no pypers at brydels,' etc.—*Ibid.* iii. 258, note 153. In 1719, the Presbytery of Edinburgh indignantly declares: 'Yea, some have arrived at that height of impiety, as not to be ashamed of washing in waters, and swimming in rivers upon the holy Sabbath.'—*Ibid.* iii. 266, note 187.

'I think David had never so sweet a time as then, when he was pursued as a partridge by his son Absalom.'—Gray's *Great and Precious Promises.*

See the whole of chapter iii. vol. iii., in which Buckle has described, by similar quotations, the condition of Scotland, chiefly in the seventeenth century

as with the Englishman, coarse and powerful. You may break the glittering ice which covers him, without bringing down upon yourself the swollen and muddy torrent that roars beneath his neighbour;[1] the stream which will issue from it will only have its petty dribblings, and will return quickly and of itself to its accustomed channel. The Frenchman is mild, naturally refined, little inclined to great or gross sensuality, affecting a sober style of talk, easily armed against filthy manners by his delicacy and good taste. The Count de Grammont has too much wit to love an orgie. After all, an orgie is not pleasant; the breaking of glasses, brawling, lewd talk, gluttony in eating and drinking,—there is nothing in this very tempting to a delicate disposition: the Frenchman, after Grammont's type, is born an epicurean, not a glutton or a drunkard. What he seeks is amusement, not unrestrained joy or bestial pleasure. I know well that he is not void of reproach. I would not trust him with my purse, he forgets too readily the distinction between *meum* and *tuum;* above all, I would not trust him with my wife: he is not over-delicate; his escapades at the gaming-table and with women smack too much of the sharper and the false-swearer. But I am wrong to use these big words in connection with him; they are too weighty, they crush so delicate and so pretty a specimen of humanity. These heavy habits of honour or shame can only be worn by a serious class of men, and Grammont takes nothing seriously, neither his fellow-men, nor himself, nor vice, nor virtue. To pass his time agreeably is his sole endeavour. 'They had said good-bye to dulness in the army,' observed Hamilton, 'as soon as he was there.' That is his pride and his aim; he troubles himself, and cares for nothing beside. His valet robs him: another would have brought the rogue to the gallows; but the theft was clever, and he keeps his rascal. He left England forgetting to marry the girl he was betrothed to; he is caught at Dover; he returns and marries her: this was an amusing *contretemps;* he asks for nothing better. One day, being penniless, he fleeces the Count de Caméran at play. 'Could Grammont, after the figure he had once cut, pack off like any common fellow? By no means; he is a man of feeling; he will maintain the honour of France.' He covers his cheating at play with a joke; at bottom, his notions of property are not over-clear. He regales Caméran with Caméran's own money; would Caméran have done it better, or otherwise? What matter if his money be in Grammont's purse or his own? The main point is arrived at, since there is pleasure in getting the money, and there is pleasure in spending it. The hateful and the ignoble vanish from a life conducted thus. If he pays his court to princes, you may be sure it is not on his knees; so lively a soul is not weighed down by respect; his wit places him on a level with the greatest; under pretext of amusing the king, he tells

[1] See, in Richardson, Swift, and Fielding, but particularly in Hogarth the delineation of this brutish debauchery.

him plain truths.[1] If he finds himself in London, surrounded by open debauchery, he does not plunge into it; he passes through on tiptoe, and so daintily that the mire does not stick to him. We do not recognise any longer in his anecdotes the anguish and the brutality which the circumstances actually conceal; the narrative flows on quickly, raising a smile, then another, and another yet, so that the mind is brought by an adroit and easy progress to something like good humour. At table, Grammont will never stuff himself; at play, he will never grow violent; with his mistress, he will never give vent to coarse talk; in a duel, he will not hate his adversary. The wit of a Frenchman is like French wine; it makes men neither brutal, nor wicked, nor gloomy. Such is the spring of these pleasures: a supper will destroy neither the delicacy, nor the good nature, nor the enjoyment. The libertine remains sociable, polished, obliging; his gaiety culminates only in the gaiety of others;[2] he is attentive to them as naturally as to himself; and in addition, he is ever on the alert and in a mood for intellectual exertion: sallies, flashes of brilliancy, witty speeches, sparkle on his lips; he can think at table and in company, sometimes better than if alone or sober. It is clear that with him debauchery does not extinguish the man; Grammont would say that it perfects him, that wit, the heart, the intelligence only arrive at excellence and true enjoyment, amid the elegance and animation of a choice supper.

III.

It is quite the contrary in England. When we scratch the covering of an Englishman's morality, the brute appears in its violence and its deformity. One of the English statesmen said that with the French an unchained mob could be led by words of humanity and honour, but that in England it was necessary, in order to appease them, to throw to them raw flesh. Violence, blood, orgie, that is the food on which this mob of noblemen precipitated itself. All that excuses a carnival was absent; and, in particular, wit. Three years after the return of the king, Butler published his *Hudibras;* and with what *éclat* his contemporaries only could tell, while the echo is sustained down to our own days. How mean is the wit, with what awkwardness and dulness he dilutes his splenetic satire! Here and there lurks a happy picture, the remnant of a poetry which has just perished; but the whole material of the work reminds one of a Scarron, as unworthy as the other, and more malignant. It is written, they say, on the model of

[1] The king was playing at backgammon; a doubtful throw occurs: 'Ah, here is Grammont, who 'll decide for us; Grammont, come and decide.' 'Sire, you have lost.' 'What! you do not yet know.' . . . 'Ah, Sire, if the throw had been merely doubtful, these gentlemen would not have failed to say you had won.'

[2] Hamilton says of Grammont, 'He sought out the unfortunate only to succor them.

Don Quixote; Hudibras is a Puritan knight, who goes about, like his antitype, redressing wrongs, and pocketing beatings. It would be truer to say that it resembles the wretched imitation of Avellaneda.[1] The short metre, well suited to buffoonery, hobbles along without rest on its crutches, floundering in the mud which it delights in, as foul and as dull as that of the *Enéide Travestie*.[2] The description of Hudibras and his horse occupies the best part of a canto; forty lines are taken up by describing his beard, forty more by describing his shoes. Endless scholastic discussions, arguments as long as those of the Puritans, spread their wastes and briars over half the poem. No action, no nature, all is would-be satire and gross caricature; neither art, nor harmony, nor good taste: the Puritan style is converted into a harsh gibberish; and the engalled rancour, missing its aim by its mere excess, spoils the portrait it wishes to draw. Would you believe that such a writer gives himself airs, wishes to enliven us, pretends to be funny? What delicate raillery is there in this picture of Hudibras' beard!

'His tawny beard was th' equal grace
Both of his wisdom and his face;
In cut and die so like a tile,
A sudden view it would beguile:
The upper part whereof was whey,
The nether orange, mix'd with grey.
The hairy meteor did denounce
The fall of sceptres and of crowns:
With grisly type did represent
Declining age of government,
And tell with hieroglyphic spade
Its own grave and the state's were made.'[3]

Butler is so well satisfied with his insipid fun, that he prolongs it for a good many lines:

'Like Samson's heart-breakers, it grew
In time to make a nation rue;
Tho' it contributed its own fall,
To wait upon the public downfall. . . .
'Twas bound to suffer persecution
And martyrdom with resolution;
T' oppose itself against the hate
And vengeance of the incens'd state,
In whose defiance it was worn,
Still ready to be pull'd and torn,

[1] A Spanish author, who continued and imitated Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

[2] A work by Scarron. *Hudibras*, ed. Z. Grey, 1801, 2 vols., i. canto i. *v* 28a says also:

'For as Æneas bore his sire
Upon his shoulder through the fire,
Our knight did bear no less a pack
Of his own buttocks on his back.'

[3] *Hudibras*, part i. canto i *v*. 241–250.

With red-hot irons to be tortur'd,
Revil'd, and spit upon, and martyr'd.
Maugre all which, 'twas to stand fast
As long as monarchy should last;
But when the state should hap to reel,
'Twas to submit to fatal steel.
And fall, as it was consecrate,
A sacrifice to fall of state,
Whose thread of life the fatal sisters
Did twist together with its whiskers,
And twine so close, that time should never,
In life or death, their fortunes sever;
But with his rusty sickle mow
Both down together at a blow.'[1]

Could any one have taken pleasure in humour such as this:

'This sword a dagger had, his page,
That was but little for his age;
And therefore waited on him so
As dwarfs upon knights-errant do. . . .
When it had stabb'd, or broke a head,
It would scrape trenchers, or chip bread. . . .
'Twould make clean shoes, and in the earth
Set leeks and onions, and so forth.'[2]

Everything turns on the trivial: if any beauty presents itself, it is spoiled by burlesque. To read those long details of the kitchen, those boisterous and crude jokes, one might fancy oneself in the company of a common buffoon in the market; it is the talk of the quacks on the bridges, adapting their imagination and language to the manners of the beer-shop and the hovel. There is filth to be met with there; in short, the rabble will laugh when the mountebank alludes to the disgusting acts of private life.[3] Such is the grotesque stuff in which the courtiers of the Restoration delighted; their spite and their coarseness took a pleasure

[1] *Hudibras*, part i. canto i. *v.* 253–280.

[2] *Ibid. v.* 375–386.

[3] 'Quoth Hudibras, I smell a rat.
Ralpho, thou dost prevaricate;
For though the thesis which thou lay'st
Be true *ad amussim* as thou say'st
(For that bear-baiting should appear
Jure divino, lawfuller
Than Synods are, thou do'st deny,
Totidem verbis; so do I),
Yet there is fallacy in this;
For if by thy *homœosis*,
Tussis pro crepitu, . . .
Thou wouldst sophistically imply,
Both are unlawful, I deny.'
Part i. canto i. *v.* 821–834.

in the spectacle of these bawling puppets; even now, after two centuries, we hear the ribald laughter of this audience of lackeys.

IV.

Charles II., when at his meals, ostentatiously drew Grammont's attention to the fact that his officers served him on their knees. They were in the right; it was their fit posture. Lord Chancellor Clarendon, one of the most honoured and honest men of the Court, learns suddenly and in full council that his daughter Anne is *enceinte* by the Duke of York, and that the duke, the king's brother, has promised her marriage. Listen to the words of this tender father; he has himself taken care to hand them down:

'The Chancellor broke out into a very immoderate passion against the wickedness of his daughter, and said with all imaginable earnestness, "that as soon as he came home, he would turn her (his daughter) out of his house as a strumpet to shift for herself, and would never see her again."'[1]

Observe that this great man had received the news from the king unprepared, and that he made use of these fatherly expressions on the spur of the moment. He added, 'that he had much rather his daughter should be the duke's whore than his wife.' Is this not heroical? But let Clarendon speak for himself. Only such a true monarchical heart can surpass itself.

'He was ready to give a positive judgment, in which he hoped their lordships would concur with him; that the king should immediately cause the woman to be sent to the Tower, and to be cast into a dungeon under so strict a guard, that no person living should be admitted to come to her: and then that an act of parliament should be immediately passed for the cutting off her head, to which he would not only give his consent, but would very willingly be the first man that should propose it.'[2]

What Roman virtue! Afraid of not being believed, he insists; whoever knew the man, will believe that he said all this very heartily. He is not yet satisfied; he repeats his advice; he addresses to the king different conclusive reasonings, in order that they might cut off the head of his daughter:

'I had rather submit and bear it (this disgrace) with all humility, than that it should be repaired by making her his wife, the thought whereof I do so much abominate, that I had much rather see her dead, with all the infamy that is due to her presumption.'[3]

In this manner, a man, who is in a difficulty, can keep his salary and his Chancellor's robes. Sir Charles Berkley, captain of the Duke of York's guards, did better still; he solemnly swore 'that he had lain

[1] *The Life of Clarendon*, ed. by himself, new ed., 1827, 3 vols., i. 378.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 379.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 380.

with the young lady,' and declared himself ready to marry her 'for the sake of the duke, though he knew well the familiarity the duke had with her.' Then, shortly afterwards, he confessed that he had lied, but in all good intention, in all honour, in order to save the royal family from such a *mésalliance*. This admirable self-devotion was rewarded; he soon had a pension from the privy purse, and was created Earl of Falmouth. From the first, the baseness of the public corporations rivalled that of individuals. The House of Commons, but recently master of the country, still full of Presbyterians, rebels, and conquerors, voted 'that neither themselves nor the people of England could be freed from the horrid guilt of the late unnatural rebellion, or from the punishment which that guilt merited, unless they formally availed themselves of his Majesty's grace and pardon, as set forth in the declaration of Breda.'[1] Then all these heroes went in a body and threw themselves with contrition at the sacred feet of their monarch. In this universal weakness it seemed that no one had any courage left. The king became the hireling of Louis XIV., and sold his country for a pension of £200,000. Ministers, members of Parliament, ambassadors, all received French money. The contagion spread even to patriots, to men noted for their purity, to martyrs. Lord Russell intrigued with Versailles; Algernon Sidney accepted 500 guineas. They had not discrimination enough to retain a show of spirit; they had not spirit enough to retain a show of honour.[2]

In men so degraded, the first thing that strikes you is the bloodthirsty instinct of brute beasts. Sir John Coventry, a member of Parliament, had let some word escape him, which was construed into a reproach of the royal amours. His friend, the Duke of Monmouth, contrived that he should be treacherously assaulted under the king's command, by respectable men devoted to his service, who slit his nose to the bone. A vile wretch of the name of Blood tried to assassinate the Duke of Ormond, and to stab the guardian of the Tower, in order to steal the crown and jewels. Charles II., considering that this was an interesting and distinguished man of his kind, pardoned him, gave him an estate in Ireland, and admitted him to his presence, side by

[1] *Pictorial History*, iii. 664.

[2] 'Mr. Evelyn tells me of several of the menial servants of the Court lacking bread, that have not received a farthing wages since the King's coming in.'—*Pepys' Diary*, ed. Lord Braybrooke, 3d ed., 1848, 5 vols., iv. April 26, 1667.

'Mr. Povy says that to this day the King do follow the women as much as he ever did; that the Duke of York hath come out of his wife's bed, and gone to others laid in bed for him; that the family (of the duke) is in horrible disorder by being in debt by spending above £60,000 per annum, when he hath not £40,000' (*Ibid.* iv. June 23, 1667).

'It is certain that, as it now is, the seamen of England, in my conscience, would, if they could, go over and serve the king of France or Holland rather than us.'—(*Ibid.* iv. June 25, 1667).

side with the Duke of Ormond, so that Blood became a sort of hero, and was received in society. After such splendid examples, men dared everything. The Duke of Buckingham, a lover of the Countess of Shrewsbury, slew the Earl in a duel; the Countess, disguised as a page, held Buckingham's horse, while she embraced him, covered as he was with her husband's blood; and the murderers and adulterers returned publicly, as in a triumphal march, to the house of the dead man. One can no longer wonder at hearing Count Königsmark describe as a 'peccadillo' an assassination which he had committed by waylaying his victim. I transcribe a duel out of Pepys, to give a notion of the manners of these soldier cut-throats:—

'Sir H. Bellassis and Tom Porter, the greatest friends in the world, were talking together: and Sir H. Bellassis talked a little louder than ordinary to Tom Porter, giving of him some advice. Some of the company standing by said, "What! are they quarrelling, that they talk so high?" Sir H. Bellassis, hearing it, said, "No!" says he: "I would have you know I never quarrel, but I strike; and take that as a rule of mine!" "How?" says Tom Porter, "strike! I would I could see the man in England that durst give me a blow!" with that Sir H. Bellassis did give him a box of the eare; and so they were going to fight there, but were hindered. . . . Tom Porter, being informed that Sir H. Bellassis' coach was coming, went out of the coffee-house where he staid for the tidings, and stopped the coach, and bade Sir H. Bellassis come out. "Why," says H. Bellassis, "you will not hurt me coming out, will you?" "No," says Tom Porter. So out he went, and both drew. . . . They wounded one another, and Sir H. Bellassis so much that it is feared he will die,' which he did ten days after.[1]

Bull-dogs like these, were not to be expected to take pity on their enemies. The Restoration opened with a butchery. The Lords conducted the trials of the republicans with a shamelessness of cruelty and an excess of rancour that were extraordinary. A sheriff struggled with Sir Harry Vane on the scaffold, rummaging his pockets, and taking from him a paper which he attempted to read. During the trial of Major-General Harrison, the hangman was placed by his side, in a black dress, with a rope in his hand; they sought to give him a full enjoyment of the foretaste of death. He was cut down alive from the gibbet, and disembowelled; he saw his entrails cast into the fire; he was then quartered, and his still beating heart was torn out and shown to the people. The cavaliers gathered round for amusement. Here and there one of them would do worse even than this. Colonel Turner, seeing them quarter John Coke, the lawyer, told the sheriff's men to bring Hugh Peters, another of the condemned, nearer; the executioner came up, and rubbing his bloody hands, asked the unfortunate man if the work pleased him. The rotting bodies of Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw were dug up in the night, and their heads fixed on poles over Westminster Hall. Ladies went to see these disgraceful scenes;

[1] *Pepys' Diary*, vol. iv., 29th July, 1667.

the good Evelyn applauded them; the courtiers made songs on them. These people were fallen so low, that they did not even turn sick at it. Sight and smell no longer brought a natural repugnance; their senses were as dead as their hearts.

From carnage they threw themselves into debauchery. You should read the life of the Earl of Rochester, a courtier and a poet, who was the hero of the time. His manners were those of a lawless and wretched mountebank; his delight was to haunt the stews, to debauch women, to write filthy songs and lewd pamphlets; he spent his time between scandal with the maids of honour, broils with men of letters, the receiving of insults, the giving of blows. By way of playing the gallant, he eloped with his wife before he married her. To make a display of scepticism, he ended by declining a duel, and gained the name of a coward. For five years together he was said to be drunk. The spirit within him failing of a worthy outlet, plunged him into adventures more befitting a clown. Once with the Duke of Buckingham he rented an inn on the Newmarket road, and turned innkeeper, supplying the husbands with drink and defiling their wives. He introduced himself, disguised as an old woman, into the house of a miser, robbed him of his wife, and passed her on to Buckingham. The husband hanged himself; they made very merry over the affair. At another time he disguised himself as a chairman, then as a beggar, and paid court to the gutter-girls. He ended by turning charlatan, astrologer, and vendor of drugs for procuring abortion, in the suburbs. It was the licentiousness of a fervid imagination, which fouled itself as another would have adorned it, which forced its way into lewdness and folly as another would have done into sense and beauty. What can come of love in hands like these? One cannot copy even the titles of his poems; they were written only for the haunts of vice. Stendhal said that love is like a dried-up bough cast into a mine; the crystals cover it, spread out into filagree work, and end by converting the worthless stick into a sparkling tuft of the purest diamonds. Rochester begins by depriving love of all its adornment, and to make sure of grasping it, converts it into a stick. Every refined sentiment, every fancy; the enchantment, the serene, sublime glow which transforms in a moment this wretched world of ours; the illusion which, uniting all the powers of our being, shows us perfection in a finite creature, and eternal bliss in a transient emotion,—all has vanished; there remain but satiated appetites and palled senses. The worst of it is, that he writes without spirit, and methodically enough. He has no natural ardour, no picturesque sensuality; his satires prove him a disciple of Boileau. Nothing is more disgusting than obscenity in cold blood. One can endure the obscene works of Giulio Romano, and his Venetian voluptousness, because in them genius sets off sensuality, and the loveliness of the splendid coloured draperies transforms an orgie into a work of art. We pardon Rabelais, when we have entered into the deep current of manly joy and vigour, with which

his feasts abound. We can hold our nose and have done with it, while we follow with admiration, and even sympathy, the torrent of ideas and fancies which flows through his mire. But to see a man trying to be elegant and remaining coarse, endeavouring to paint the sentiments of a navvy in the language of a man of the world, who tries to find a suitable metaphor for every kind of obscenity, who plays the blackguard studiously and deliberately, who, excused neither by character, nor the glow of fancy, nor science, nor genius, degrades a good style of writing to such a work,—it is like a rascal who sets himself to sully a set of gems in a gutter. The end of all is but disgust and sickness. While La Fontaine continues to the last day capable of tenderness and happiness, this man at the age of thirty insults the weaker sex with spiteful malignity:

'When she is young, she whores herself for sport;
And when she's old, she bawds for her support. . . .
She is a snare, a shamble, and a stews;
Her meat and sauce she does for lechery chuse,
And does in laziness delight the more,
Because by that she is provoked to whore.
Ungrateful, treacherous, enviously inclined,
Wild beasts are tamed, floods easier far confined,
Than is her stubborn and rebellious mind. . . .
Her temper so extravagant we find,
She hates or is impertinently kind.
Would she be grave, she then looks like a devil,
And like a fool or whore, when she be civil. . . .
Contentious, wicked, and not fit to trust,
And covetous to spend it on her lust.'[1]

What a confession is such a judgment! what an abstract of life! You see the roisterer dulled at the end of his career, dried up like a mummy, eaten away by ulcers. Amid the choruses, the crude satires, the remembrance of abortive plans, the sullied enjoyments which are heaped up in his wearied brain as in a sink, the fear of damnation is fermenting; he dies a devotee at the age of thirty-three years.

At the head of all, the king sets the example. This 'old goat,' as the courtiers call him, imagines himself a man of gaiety and elegance. What gaiety! what elegance! French manners do not suit men beyond the Channel. Catholics, they fall into a narrow superstition; epicureans, into gross debauchery; courtiers, into a base servility; sceptics, into a vulgar atheism. The court in England could imitate only French furniture and dress. The regular and decent exterior which public taste maintained at Versailles, was here dispensed with as troublesome. Charles and his brother, in their state dress, would set off running as in a carnival. On the day when the Dutch fleet burned the English

[1] It is doubtful if these lines are Rochester's, at least I have not been able to find them in any edition of his works.—TR

ships in the Thames, the king supped with the Duchess of Monmouth, and amused himself by chasing a moth. In council, while business was being transacted, he would be playing with his dog. Rochester and Buckingham insulted him by insolent repartees or dissolute epigrams; he would fly into a passion and suffer them to go on. He quarrelled with his mistress in public; she called him an idiot, and he called her a jade. He would leave her in the morning, 'so that the very sentrys speak of it.'[1] He suffered her to play him false before the eyes of all; at one time she received a couple of actors, one of whom was a mountebank. If need were, she would use abusive language to him. 'The King hath declared that he did not get the child of which she is conceived at this time. But she told him, '. . .! but you shall own it.'[2] Whereupon he did acknowledge the child, and took to himself a couple of actresses for consolation. When his new wife, Catherine of Braganza, arrived, he drove away her attendants, used coarse language to her, that he might force on her the familiarities of his mistress, and finished by degrading her to a friendship such as this. The good Pepys, notwithstanding his loyal heart, ends by saying, 'Having heard the King and the Duke talk, and seeing and observing their habits of intercourse, God forgive me, though I admire them with all the duty possible, yet the more a man considers and observes them, the less he finds of difference between them and other men, though, blessed be God! they are both princes of great nobleness and spirits.'[3] He heard that, on a certain day, the king was with Mrs. Stewart 'into corners, together, and will be with her half an hour, kissing her to the observation of all the world.'[4] Another day, Captain Ferrers told him 'how, at a ball at Court, a child was dropped by one of the ladies in dancing.' They took it off in a handkerchief, 'and the King had it in his closet a week after, and did dissect it, making great sport of it.'[5] These ghastly freaks about such vile events make one shudder. The courtiers went with the stream. Miss Jennings, who became Duchess of Tyrconnel, disguised herself one day as an orange girl, and cried her wares in the street.[6] Pepys recounts festivities in which lords and ladies smeared one another's faces with candle-grease and soot, 'till most of us were like devils.' It was the fashion to swear, to relate scandalous adventures, to get drunk, to prate against the preachers and Scripture, to gamble. Lady Castlemaine in one night lost £25,000. The Duke of St. Albans, a blind man, eighty years old, went to the gambling-house with an attendant at his side to tell him the cards. Sedley and Buckhurst stripped nearly naked, and ran through the streets after midnight. Another, in the open day, stood naked at the window to address the people. I let Grammont keep

[1] *Pepys' Diary*, ii. January 1, 1662–1663.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. July 30, 1667.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. July 25, 1665.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. Nov. 9, 1663.
Ibid. ii. Feb. 8, 17, 1662–3.
[6] *Ibid.* Feb. 20, 1664–1665

to himself his accounts of the maids of honour brought to bed, and of unnatural lusts. We must either exhibit or conceal them, and I have not the courage lightly to insinuate them, after his fashion. I end by a quotation from Pepys, which will serve for example: 'Here I first understood by their talk the meaning of company that lately were called Ballers; Harris telling how it was by a meeting of some young blades, where he was among them, and my Lady Bennet and her ladies; and their dancing naked, and all the roguish things in the world.'[1] The marvellous thing is, that this fair is not even gay; these people were misanthropic, and became morose; they quote the gloomy Hobbes, and he is their master. In fact, the philosophy of Hobbes shall give us the last word and the last characteristics of this society.

V.

Hobbes was one of those powerful, limited, and, as they are called, positive minds so common in England, of the school of Swift and Bentham, efficacious and remorseless as an iron machine. Hence we find in him a method and style of surprising dryness and vigour, most adapted to build up and pull down; hence a philosophy which, by the audacity of its teaching, has placed in an undying light one of the indestructible appearances of the human mind. In every object, every event, there is some primitive and constant fact, which forms, as it were, the nucleus around which group themselves the various developments which complete it. The positive mind strikes down immediately upon this nucleus, crushes the brilliant growth which covers it; disperses, annihilates it; then, concentrating upon it the full force of its violent grasp, loosens it, raises it up, pares it down, and lifts it into a conspicuous position, from whence it may henceforth shine out to all men and for all time like a crystal. All ornament, all emotions, are excluded from the style of Hobbes; it is a mere aggregate of arguments and concise facts, united together by deduction, as by iron bands. There are no tints, no fine or unusual word. He makes use only of words most familiar to common and lasting usage; there are not a dozen employed by him which, during two hundred years, have grown obsolete; he pierces to the root of all sensation, removes the transient and brilliant externals, compresses the solid portion which is the permanent subject-matter of all thought, and the proper object of common intelligence. He curtails throughout in order to strengthen; he attains solidity by suppression. Of all the bonds which connect ideas, he retains but one, and that the most stable; his style is only a continuous chain of the most stubborn description, wholly made up of additions and subtractions, reduced to a combination of certain simple processes, which, added on to or diminishing from one another, make up, under various names, the totals or differences, of which we are for ever either

[1] *Pepys' Diary*, iv. May 30, 1668.

studying the formation or unravelling the elements. He pursued beforehand the method of Condillac, beginning with tracing to the original fact, palpably and clearly, so as to pursue step by step the descent and parentage of the ideas of which this primary fact is the stock, in such a manner that the reader, conducted from total to total, may at any moment test the exactness of his operation, and verify the truth of his results. Such a logical system cuts across the grain of prejudice with a mechanical stiffness and boldness. Hobbes clears science of scholastic words and theories. He laughs down quiddities, he does away with rational and intelligible classifications, he rejects the authority of references.[1] He cuts, as with a surgeon's knife, at the heart of the most living creeds. He denies the authenticity of the books of Moses, Joshua, and the like. He declares that no argument proves the divinity of Scripture, and that, in order to believe it, every man requires a supernatural and personal revelation. He upsets in half-a-dozen words the authority of this and every other revelation.[2] He reduces man to a mere body, the soul to a function, God to an unknown existence. His phrases read like equations or mathematical results. In fact, it is from mathematics[3] that he derives the idea of all science. He would reconstitute moral science on the same basis. He assigns to it this foundation when he lays down that sensation is an internal movement caused by an external shock; desire, an internal movement toward an external object; and he builds upon these two notions the whole system of morals. Again, he assigns to morals a mathematical method, when he distinguishes, like the geometrician, between two simple ideas, which he transforms by degrees into two more complex; and when on the basis of sensation and desire he constructs the passions, the rights and institutions of man, just as the geometrician out of straight lines and curves constructs all the varieties of figure. To morals he gives a mathematical aspect, by mapping out the incomplete and rigid construction of human life, like the network of imaginary forms which geometricians have conceived. For the first time there was discernible in him, as well as in Descartes, but exaggerated and standing out more conspicuously, that species of intellect which produced the classic age in Europe: not

[1] If we would pay respect to antiquity, the present age is the most ancient.

[2] 'To say he hath spoken to him in a dream, is no more than to say he dreamed that God spoke to him. To say he hath seen a vision or heard a voice, is to say that he has dreamed between sleeping and waking. To say he speaks by supernatural inspiration, is to say he finds an ardent desire to speak, or some strong opinion of himself for which he cannot allege any sufficient and natural reason.'

[3] 'From the principal parts of nature, reason, and passion, have proceeded two kinds of learning, mathematical and dogmatical. The former is free from controversy and dispute, because it consisteth in comparing figure and motion only, in which things truth and the interest of men oppose not each other. But in the other there is nothing undisputable, because it compares men, and meddles with their right and profit.'

the independence of inspiration and genius which marked the Renaissance; not the mature experimental methods and conceptions combined which distinguish the present age, but the independence of argumentative reasoning, which, dispensing with the imagination, liberating itself from tradition, badly practising experience, acknowledges its queen in logic, its model in mathematics, its instrument in ratiocination, its audience in polished society, its employment in average truth, its subject-matter in abstract humanity, its formula in ideology, and in the French Revolution at once its glory and its condemnation, its triumph and its end.

But whereas Descartes, in the midst of a purified society and religion, noble and calm, enthroned intelligence and elevated man, Hobbes, in the midst of an overthrown society and a religion run mad, degraded man and enthroned matter. Through disgust of Puritanism, the courtiers reduced human existence to an animal licentiousness; through disgust of Puritanism, Hobbes reduced human nature to its merely animal aspect. The courtiers were practically atheists and brutish, as he was atheistic and brutish in the province of speculation. They had established the fashion of instinct and egotism; he wrote the philosophy of egotism and instinct. They had wiped out from their hearts all refined and noble sentiments; he wiped out from the heart all noble and refined sentiment. He arranged their manners into a theory, gave them the manual of their conduct, wrote down beforehand[1] the maxims which they were to reduce to practice. With him, as with them, 'the greatest good is the preservation of life and limb; the greatest evil is death, especially with pain.' The other goods and the other evils are only the parts of these. None seek or wish for anything but that which is pleasurable. 'No man gives except for a personal advantage.' Why are friendships good things? 'Because they are useful; friends serve for defence and otherwise.' Why do we pity one another? 'Because we imagine that a similar misfortune may befall ourselves.' Why is it noble to pardon him who asks it? 'Because thus one proves confidence in self.' Such is the background of the human heart. Consider now what becomes of the most precious flowers in these blighting hands. 'Music, painting, poetry are agreeable as imitations which recall the past, because if the past was good, it is agreeable in its imitation as a good thing; but if it was bad, it is agreeable in its imitation as being past.' To this gross mechanism he reduces the fine arts; it was perceptible in his attempt to translate the *Iliad*. In his sight, philosophy is a thing of like kind. 'Wisdom is serviceable, because it has in it some kind of protection; if it is desirable in itself, it is therefore pleasant.' Thus there is no dignity in science. It is a pastime or an assistance; good, as a servant or a puppet is a good thing. Money, being more serviceable, is worth more. 'Not he who is wise is rich, as

[1] His chief works were written between 1646 and 1655.

the Stoics say; but, on the contrary, he who is rich is wise.' As to religion, it is but 'the fear of an invisible power, whether this be a figment, or adopted from history by general consent.' Indeed, this was true for a Rochester or a Charles II.; cowards or bullies, superstitious or blasphemers, they conceived of nothing beyond. Neither is there any natural right. 'Before men were bound by contract one with another, each had the right to do what he would against whom he would.' Nor any natural friendship. 'All association is for the cause of advantage or of glory, that is, for love of one's self, not of one's associates. The origin of great and durable associations is not mutual well-wishing, but mutual fear. The desire of injuring is innate in all. . . . Warfare was the natural condition of men before societies were formed; and this not incidentally, but of all against all: and this war is of its own nature eternal.' Sectarian violence let loose the conflict of ambitions; the fall of governments, the overflow of soured imaginations and malevolent passions, had raised up this idea of society and of mankind. One and all, philosophers and people, yearned for monarchy and repose. Hobbes, the inexorable logician, would have had it absolute; repression would have been more stern, peace more lasting. The sovereign should be unopposed. Whatsoever he might do against a subject, under whatever pretext, would not be injustice. He ought to decide upon the canonical books. He was pope, and more than pope. Were he to command it, his subjects should renounce Christ, at least with their mouth; the original contract has given up to him, without any reservation, all responsibility of external actions; at least, according to this view, the sectarian will no longer have the pretext of his conscience in harassing the state. To such extremities had the intense weariness and horrors of civil war driven a narrow but logical intellect. Upon the secure den in which he had with every effort imprisoned and confined the evil beast of prey, he laid as a final weight, in order that he might perpetuate the captivity of humanity, the whole philosophy and theory not simply of man, but of the remainder of the universe. He reduced judgment to the 'combination of two terms,' ideas to conditions of the brain, sensations to motions of the body, general laws to simple words, all substance to corporeality, all science to the knowledge of sensible bodies, the human being to a body capable of motion given or received; so that man, recognising himself only under this despised form, and degraded in his conception of himself and of the world, might bow beneath the burden of a necessary authority, and submit in the end to the yoke which his rebellious nature rejects, yet is forced to undergo. Such, in brief, is the aim which this spectacle of the English Restoration suggests. Men deserved then this treatment, because they gave birth to this philosophy; they were represented on the stage as they had proved themselves to be in theory and in manners.

VI.

When the theatres, which Parliament had closed, were re-opened, the change of public taste was soon manifested. Shirley, the last of the grand old school, wrote and lived no longer. Waller, Buckingham, and Dryden were compelled to dish up the plays of Shakspeare and Fletcher and Beaumont, and to adapt them to the modern style. Pepys, who went to see *Midsummer Night's Dream*, declared that he would never go there again; 'for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.'[1] The comedy was transformed; the fact was, that the public was transformed.

What an audience was that of Shakspeare and Fletcher! What youthful and pleasing souls! In this evil-smelling room in which it was necessary to burn juniper, before that miserable half-lighted stage, before decorations worthy of an alehouse, with men playing the women's parts, illusion enchained them. They scarcely troubled themselves about probabilities; they could be carried in an instant over forest and ocean, from clime to clime, across twenty years of time, through ten battles and all the hurry of adventure. They did not care to be always laughing; comedy, after a burst of buffoonery, resumed its serious or tender tone. They came less to be amused than to muse. In these youthful minds, amidst a woof of passions and dreams, there were dark passions and brilliant dreams whose imprisoned swarm buzzed indistinctly, waiting for the poet to come and lay bare to them the novelty and the splendour of heaven. The green fields revealed by a lightning flash, the gray mane of a long and overhanging billow, a wet forest nook where the deer raise their frightened heads, the sudden smile and purpling cheek of a young girl in love, the sublime and various flight of all delicate sentiments, a cloak of ecstatic and romantic passion over all,—these were the sights and feelings which they came to seek. They raised themselves without any assistance to the summit of the world of ideas; they desired to contemplate extreme generosity, absolute love; they were not astonished at the sight of fairy-land; they entered without an effort into the region of poetical transformation, whose light was necessary to their eyes. They took in at a glance its excess and its caprices; they needed no preparation; they followed its digressions, its whimsicalities, the crowding of its abundant creations, the sudden prodigality of its high colouring, as a musician follows a symphony. They were in that transient and strained condition in which the imagination, adult and pure, laden with desire, curiosity, force, develops man all at once, and in that man the most exalted and exquisite feelings.

The roisterers took the place of these. They were rich, they had tried to invest themselves with the polish of Frenchmen; they added to the stage moveable decorations, music, lights, probability, comfort,

[1] *Pepys' Diary*, ii. Sept. 29, 1662.

every external aid; but they wanted the heart. Imagine those foppish and half-intoxicated men, who saw in love nothing beyond desire, and in man nothing beyond sensuality; Rochester in the place of Mercutio. What part of his soul could comprehend poesy and fancy? Romantic poetry was altogether beyond his reach; he could only seize the actual world, and of this world but the palpable and gross externals. Give him an exact picture of ordinary life, commonplace and probable occurrences, literal imitations of what he himself is and does; lay the scene in London, in the current year; copy his coarse words, his brutal jokes, his conversation with the orange girls, his rendezvous in the park, his attempts at French dissertation. Let him recognise himself, let him find again the people and the manners he has just left behind him in the tavern or the ante-chamber; let the theatre and the street reproduce one another. Comedy will give him the same entertainment as real life; he will wallow equally well there in vulgarity and lewdness; to be present there will demand neither imagination nor wit; eyes and memory are the only requisites. This exact imitation will amuse him and instruct him at the same time. Filthy words will make him laugh through sympathy; shameless scenes will divert him by appealing to his recollections. The author, too, will take care to arouse him by his plot, which generally has the deceiving of a father or a husband for its subject. The fine gentlemen agree with the author in siding with the gallant; they follow his fortunes with interest, and fancy that they themselves have the same success with the fair. Add to this, women debauched, and willing to be debauched; and it is manifest how these provocations, these manners of prostitutes, that interchange of exchanges and surprises, that carnival of rendezvous and suppers, the impudence of the scenes only stopping short of physical demonstration, those songs with their double meaning, those indecent speeches and repartees which accompanied the *tableaux vivants*, all that stage imitation of orgie, must have stirred up the innermost feelings of the habitual practisers of intrigue. And what is more, the theatre gave its sanction to their manners. By representing nothing but vice, it authorised their vices. Authors laid it down as a rule, that all women were impudent hussies, and that all men were brutes. Debauchery in their hands became a matter of course, nay more, a matter of good taste; they teach it. Rochester and Charles II. could quit the theatre edified in their hearts; more convinced than ever that virtue was only a pretence, the pretence of clever rascals who wanted to sell themselves dear.

VII.

Dryden, who was amongst the first[1] to adopt this view of the matter, did not adopt it heartily. A kind of hazy mist, the relic of the former age, still floated over his plays. His wealthy imagination half

[1] His *Wild Gallant* dates from 1662.

bound him to the comedy of romance. At one time he adapted Milton's *Paradise*, Shakspeare's *Tempest*, and *Troïlus and Cressida*. Another time he imitated, in *Love in a Nunnery*, in *Marriage à la Mode*, in *The Mock Astrologer*, the imbroglios and surprises of the Spanish stage. Sometimes he displays the sparkling images and lofty metaphors of the older national poets, sometimes the affected phraseology and cavilling wit of Calderon and Lope de Vega. He mingles the tragic and the humorous, the overthrow of thrones and the ordinary description of manners. But in this awkward compromise the poetic spirit of ancient comedy disappears; only the dress and the gilding remain. The new characters are gross and vicious, with the instincts of a lackey under the externals of a lord; which is the more shocking, because by it Dryden contradicts his own talents, being at bottom grave and a poet; he follows the fashion, and not his own mind; he plays the libertine with deliberate forethought, to adapt himself to the taste of the day.[1] He plays the blackguard awkwardly and dogmatically; he is impious without enthusiasm, and in measured periods. One of his gallants cries:

> 'Is not love love without a priest and altars?
> The temples are inanimate, and know not
> What vows are made in them; the priest stands ready
> For his hire, and cares not what hearts he couples;
> Love alone is marriage.'[2]

Hippolita says, 'I wished the ball might be kept perpetually in our cloister, and that half the handsome nuns in it might be turned to men, for the sake of the other.'[3] Dryden has no tact or contrivance. In his *Spanish Friar*, the queen, a good enough woman, tells Torrismond that she is going to have the old dethroned king put to death, in order to marry him, Torrismond, more at her ease. Presently she is informed that the murder is completed. 'Now,' says she, 'let us marry; this night, this happy night, is yours and mine.'[4] Side by side with sensual tragedy, a comic intrigue, pushed to the most indecent familiarity, exhibits the love of a cavalier for a married woman, who in the end

[1] 'We love to get our mistresses, and purr over them, as cats do over mice, and let them get a little way; and all the pleasure is to pat them back again.'—*Mock Astrologer*, ii. 1.

Wildblood says to his mistress: 'I am none of those unreasonable lovers that propose to themselves the loving to eternity. A month is commonly my stint. And Jacintha replies: 'Or would not a fortnight serve our turn?'—*Mock Astrologer*, ii. 1.

Frequently one would think Dryden was translating Hobbes, by the harshness of his jests.

[2] *Love in a Nunnery*, ii. 3.

[3] *Ibid.* iii. 3.

[4] *Spanish Friar*, iii. 3. And jumbled up with the plot we keep meeting with political allusions. This marks the time. Torrismond, to excuse himself from marrying the queen, says, 'Power which in one age is tyranny is ripen'd in the next to true succession She's in possession.'—*Spanish Friar*, iv. 2.

turns out to be his sister. Dryden discovers nothing in this situation to shock him. He has lost the commonest repugnances of natural modesty. Translating any pretty broad play, *Amphitryon* for instance, he finds it too pure; he strips off all its small delicacies, and enlarges its very improprieties.[1] Thus Jupiter says:

> 'Kings and priest are in a manner bound,
> For reverence sake, to be close hypocrites.'[2]

And he proceeds thereupon boldly to lay bare his own despotism. At bottom, his sophisms and his shamelessness serve Dryden as a means of decrying by rebound the arbitrary Divinity of the theologians:

> 'Fate is what I,
> By virtue of omnipotence, have made it;
> And power omnipotent can do no wrong!
> 'Not to myself, because I will it so;
> Nor yet to men, for what they are is mine.—
> This night I will enjoy Amphitryon's wife;
> For when I made her, I decreed her such
> As I should please to love.'[3]

This open pedantry is changed into open lust as soon as he sees Alcmena. No detail is omitted: Jupiter speaks his whole mind to her, and before the maids; and next morning, when he is going away, she outdoes him: she hangs on to him, and indulges in the most familiar details. All the noble externals of high gallantry are torn off like a troublesome garment; it is a cynical recklessness in place of an aristocratic decency; the scene is written after the example of Charles II. and Castlemaine,[4] not of Louis XIV. and Mme. de Montespan.

VIII.

I pass over several writers: Crowne, author of *Sir Courtly Nice;* Shadwell, an imitator of Ben Jonson; Mrs. Aphra Behn, who calls herself Astræa, a spy and a courtesan, paid by government and the public. Etheredge is the first to set the example of imitative comedy in his

[1] Plautus' *Amphitryon* has been imitated by Dryden and Molière. Sir Walter Scott, in the introduction to Dryden's play, says: 'He is, in general, coarse and vulgar, where Molière is witty; and where the Frenchman ventures upon a double meaning, the Englishman always contrives to make it a single one.'—TR.

[2] *Amphitryon*, i. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] As Jupiter is departing, on the plea of daylight, Alcmena says to him:

> 'But you and I will draw our curtains close,
> Extinguish daylight, and put out the sun.
> Come back, my lord. . . .
> You have not yet laid long enough in bed
> To warm your widowed side.'—Act ii. 2.

Compare Plautus' Roman matron and Molière's honest Frenchwoman with this expansive personage.

Man of Fashion, and to depict only the manners of his age; for the rest he is an open roisterer, and frankly describes his habits:

> 'From hunting whores, and haunting play,
> And minding nothing all the day,
> And all the night too, you will say.' . . .

Such were his pursuits in London; and further on, in a letter from Ratisbon to Lord Middleton,

> 'He makes grave legs in formal fetters,
> Converses with fools and writes dull letters;'

and gets small consolation out of the German ladies. In this grave mood Etheredge undertook the duties of an ambassador. One day, having dined too freely, he fell from the top of a staircase, and broke his neck; a loss of no great importance. But the hero of this society was William Wycherley, the coarsest writer who has polluted the stage. Being sent to France during the Revolution, he there became a Roman Catholic; then on his return abjured; then in the end, as Pope tells us, abjured again. Robbed of their Protestant ballast, these shallow brains ran from dogma to dogma, from superstition to incredulity or indifference, to end in a state of fear. He had learnt of M. de Montausier[1] the art of wearing gloves and a peruke, which sufficed in those days to make a gentleman. This merit, and the success of a filthy piece, *Love in a Wood*, drew upon him the eyes of the Duchess of Cleveland, mistress of the king and of anybody. This woman, who used to have amours with a rope-dancer, picked him up one day in the very midst of the Ring. She put her head out of her carriage-window, and cried to him before all, 'Sir, you are a rascal, a villain, the son of a ——.' Touched by this compliment, he accepted her favours, and in consequence obtained those of the king. He lost them, married a woman of bad temper, ruined himself, remained seven years in prison, passed the remainder of his life in pecuniary difficulties, regretting his youth, losing his memory, scribbling bad verses, which he got Pope to correct, pestering him with his pride and self-esteem, stringing together dull obscenities, dragging his spent body and enervated brain through the stages of misanthropy and libertinage, playing the miserable part of a toothless roisterer and a white-haired blackguard. Eleven days before his death he married a young girl, who turned out to be a strumpet. He ended as he had begun, by unskilfulness and misconduct, having succeeded neither in becoming happy nor honest, having used his vigorous intelligence and real talent only to his own injury and the injury of others.

The reason was, that Wycherley was not an epicurean born. His nature, genuinely English, that is to say, energetic and sombre, rebelled

[1] Himself a Huguenot, who had become a Roman Catholic, and the husband of Julie d'Angennes, for whom the French poets composed the celebrated *Guirlande*.—Tr.

against the easy and amiable carelessness which enables one to take life as a pleasure-party. His style is laboured, and troublesome to read. His tone is virulent and bitter. He frequently forces his comedy in order to get at spiteful satire. Effort and animosity mark all that he says or puts into the mouths of others. It is Hobbes, not meditative and calm, but active and angry, who sees in man nothing but vice, yet feels himself man to the very core. The only fault he rejects is hypocrisy; the only virtue he preaches is frankness. He wants others to confess their vice, and he begins by confessing his own.

'Though I cannot lie like them (the poets), I am as vain as they; I cannot but publicly give your Grace my humble acknowledgments. . . . This is the poet's gratitude, which in plain English is only pride and ambition.'[1]

We find in him no poetry of expression, no glimpse of the ideal, no system of morality which could console, raise, or purify men. He shuts them up in their waywardness and uncleanness, and settles himself along with them. He shows them the filth of the shoals in which he confines them; he expects them to breathe this atmosphere; he plunges them into it, not to disgust them with it as by an accidental fall, but to accustom them to it as if it were their natural element. He tears down the partitions and decorations by which they endeavour to conceal their state, or regulate their disorder. He takes pleasure in making them fight, he delights in the hubbub of their unfettered instincts; he loves the violent ragings of the human mass, the confusion of their crimes, the rawness of their bruises. He strips their lusts, sets them forth at full length, feels them in their rebound; and whilst he condemns them as nauseous, he relishes them. People take what pleasure they can get: the drunkards in the suburbs, if asked how they can relish their miserable liquor, will tell you it makes them drunk as soon as better stuff, and that is the only pleasure they have.

I can understand that an author may dare much in a novel. It is a psychological study, akin to criticism or history, having almost equal licence, because it contributes almost equally to explain the anatomy of the heart. It is quite necessary to expose moral diseases, especially when this is done to add to science, coldly, accurately, and in the fashion of a dissection. Such a book is by its nature abstruse; must be read in the study, by lamp-light. But transport it to the stage, exaggerate the bed-room liberties, give them additional life by a few disreputable scenes, bestow bodily vigour upon them by the energetic action and words of the actresses; let the eyes and the senses be filled with them, not the eyes of an individual spectator, but of a thousand men and women mingled together in the pit, excited by the interest of the story, by the correctness of the literal imitation, by the glitter of

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Wycherly, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar* ed. Leigh Hunt, 1840. Dedication of *Love in a Wood* to her Grace the Duchess of Cleveland.

the lights, by the noise of applause, by the contagion of impressions which run like a shudder across excited and stretched nerves. That was the spectacle which Wycherley furnished, and which the court appreciated. Is it possible that a public, and a select public, could come and listen to such scenes? In *Love in a Wood*, amidst the complications of nocturnal rendezvous, and violations effected or begun, we meet with a witling, named Dapperwit, who desires to sell his mistress Lucy to a fine gentleman of that age, Ranger. With what minuteness he bepraises her! He knocks at her door; the intended purchaser meantime, growing impatient, is treating him like a slave. The mother comes in, but wishing to sell Lucy on her own part and for her own profit, scolds them and packs them off. Next appears an old puritanical usurer and hypocrite, named Gripe, who at first will not bargain:—

'*Mrs. Joyner.* You must send for something to entertain her with. . . . Upon my life a groat! what will this purchase?

Gripe. Two black pots of ale and a cake, at the cellar.—Come, the wine has arsenic in't. . . .

Mrs. J. A treat of a groat! I will not wag.

G. Why don't you go? Here, take more money, and fetch what you will; take here, half-a-crown.

Mrs. J. What will half-a-crown do?

G. Take a crown then, an angel, a piece;—begone!

Mrs. J. A treat only will not serve my turn; I must buy the poor wretch there some toys.

G. What toys? what? speak quickly.

Mrs. J. Pendants, necklaces, fans, ribbons, points, laces, stockings, gloves. . . .

G. But here, take half a piece for the other things.

Mrs. J. Half a piece!—

G. Prithee, begone!—take t'other piece then—two pieces—three pieces—five! here; 'tis all I have.

Mrs. J. I must have the broad-seal ring too, or I stir not.'[1]

She goes away at last, having extorted all, and Lucy plays the innocent, seems to think that Gripe is a dancing-master, and asks for a lesson. What scenes, what double meanings! At last she calls out, her mother, Mrs Crossbite, breaks open the door, and enters with men placed there beforehand; Gripe is caught in the trap; they threaten to call in the constable, they swindle him out of five hundred pounds. Need I recount the plot of the *Country Wife*? It is useless to wish to skim the subject only; one sinks deeper and deeper. Horner, a man returned from France, spreads the report that he is no longer able to trouble the peace of husbands. You may imagine what becomes of such a subject in Wycherley's hands, and he draws from it all that it contains. Women converse about Horner's condition, even before him; they suffer themselves to be undeceived, and boast of it. Three of them come to him and hold a feast, drink, sing—such songs! The excess of orgie triumphs,

[1] Act iii. 3.

adjudges itself the crown, sets itself forth in maxims. 'Our virtue,' says one of them, 'is like the statesman's religion, the quaker's word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour; but to cheat those that trust us. [1] In the last scene, the suspicions which had been aroused are set at rest by a new declaration of Horner. All the marriages are polluted, and the carnival ends by a dance of deceived husbands. To crown all, Horner recommends his example to the public, and the actress who comes on to recite the epilogue, completes the shamefulness of the piece, by warning gallants that they must look what they are doing; for that if they can deceive men, 'we women—there's no cozening us.' [2]

But the special and most extraordinary sign of the times is, that amid all these provocatives, no repellent circumstance is omitted, and that the narrator seems to aim as much at disgusting as at depraving us. [3] The fine gentlemen, even the ladies, introduce into their conversation the ways and means by which, since the sixteenth century, love has endeavoured to adorn itself. Dapperwit, when making an offer of Lucy, says, in order to account for the delay:

'Pish! give her but leave to . . . put on . . . the long patch under the left eye; awaken the roses on her cheeks with some Spanish wool, and warrant her breath with some lemon-peel.' [4]

Lady Flippant, alone in the park, cries out:

'Unfortunate lady that I am! I have left the herd on purpose to be chased, and have wandered this hour here; but the park affords not so much as a satyr for me; and no Burgundy man or drunken scourer will reel my way. The rag-women and cinder-women have better luck than I.' [5]

If these are the sweetest morsels, judge of the rest! Wycherley makes it his business to revolt even the senses; the nose, the eyes, everything suffers in his plays; the audience must have had the stomach of a sailor. And from this abyss English literature has ascended to the severity of morality, the excessive decency which it now possesses! This stage is a declared war against beauty and delicacy of every kind. If Wycherley borrows a character anywhere, it is only to do it violence, or degrade it to the level of his own characters. If he imitates the

[1] *The Country Wife*, v. 4.

[2] Read the epilogue, and see what words and details authors dared then to put in the mouths of actresses.

[3] 'That spark, who has his fruitless designs upon the bed-ridden rich widow, down to the sucking heiress in her . . . clout.'—*Love in a Wood*. i. 2.

Mrs. Flippant: 'Though I had married the fool, I thought to have reserved the wit as well as other ladies.'—*Ibid.*

Dapperwit: 'I will contest with no rival, not with my old rival your coachman.'—*Ibid.*

'She has a complexion like a Holland cheese, and no more teeth left than such as give a haut goût to her breath.'—*Ibid.* ii. 1.

[4] *The Country Wife*, iii. 2. [5] *Ibid.* v. 2.

Agnes of Molière,[1] as he does in the *Country Wife*, he marries her in order to profane marriage, deprives her of honour, still more of shame, still more of grace, and changes her artless tenderness into shameless instincts and scandalous confessions. If he takes Shakspeare's Viola, as in the *Plain Dealer*, it is to drag her through the vileness of infamy, amidst brutalities and surprises. If he translates the part of Célimène, he wipes out at one stroke the manners of a great lady, the woman's delicacy, the tact of the lady of the house, the politeness, the refined air, the superiority of wit and knowledge of the world, in order to substitute the impudence and cheats of a foul-mouthed courtesan. If he invents an almost innocent girl, Hippolita,[2] he begins by putting into her mouth words that will not bear transcribing. Whatever he does or says, whether he copies or originates, blames or praises, his stage is a defamation of mankind, which repels even when it attracts, and which sickens one while it corrupts.

A certain gift hovers over all—namely, vigour—which is never absent in England, and gives a peculiar character to their virtues as to their vices. When we have removed the oratorical and heavily constructed phrases in the French manner, we get at the genuine English talent—a deep sympathy with nature and life. Wycherley had that lucid and vigorous perspicacity which in any particular situation seizes upon gesture, physical expression, evident detail, which pierces to the depths of the crude and base, which hits off, not men in general, and passion as it ought to be, but an individual man, and passion as it is. He is a realist, not of set purpose, as the realists of our day, but naturally. In a violent manner he lays on his plaster over the grinning and pimpled faces of his rascals, in order to bring under our very eyes the stern mask to which the living imprint of their ugliness has clung in a fleeting manner. He crams his plays with incident, he multiplies action, he pushes comedy to the verge of dramatic effect; he hustles his characters amidst surprises and violence, and all but stultifies them in order to exaggerate his satire. Observe in Olivia, a copy of Célimène, the fury of the passions which he depicts. She paints her friends as does Célimène, but with what insults! Novel, a coxcomb, says

[1] The letter of Agnes, in Molière's *l'École des Femmes*, iii. 4, begins thus: 'Je veux vous écrire, et je suis bien en peine par où je m'y prendrai. J'ai des pensées que je désirerais que vous sussiez; mais je ne sais comment faire pour vous les dire, et je me défie de mes paroles,' etc. Observe how Wycherley translates it: 'Dear, sweet Mr. Horner, my husband would have me send you a base, rude, unmannerly letter; but I won't—and would have me forbid you loving me; but I won't—and would have me say to you, I hate you, poor Mr. Horner; but I won't tell a lie for him—for I'm sure if you and I were in the country at cards together, I could not help treading on your toe under the table, or rubbing knees with you, and staring in your face, till you saw me, and then looking down, and blushing for an hour together,' etc.—*Country Wife*, iv. 2.

[2] In the *Gentleman Dancing-Master*.

'But, as I was saying, madam, I have been treated to-day with all the ceremony and kindness imaginable at my lady Autumn's. But the nauseous old woman at the upper hand of her table' . . . Olivia: 'Revives the old Grecian custom, of serving in a death's head with their banquets. . . . I detest her hollow cherry cheeks: she looks like an old coach new painted. . . . She is still most splendidly, gallantly ugly, and looks like an ill piece of daubing in a rich frame.'[1] The scene is borrowed from Molière's *Misanthrope* and the *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes;* but how transformed! Our modern nerves would not endure the portrait Olivia draws of Manly, her lover; he hears her unawares; she forthwith stands before him, laughs at him to his face, declares herself to be married; tells him she means to keep the diamonds which he has given her, and defies him. Fidelia says to her:

'But, madam, what could make you dissemble love to him, when 'twas so hard a thing for you; and flatter his love to you?' *Olivia.* 'That which makes all the world flatter and dissemble, 'twas his money: I had a real passion for that. . . . As soon as I had his money, I hastened his departure like a wife, who when she has made the most of a dying husband's breath, pulls away his pillow.'[2]

The last phrase is rather that of a morose satirist than an accurate observer. The woman's impudence is like a professed courtesan's. In love at first sight with Fidelia, whom she takes for a young man, she hangs upon her neck, 'stuffs her with kisses,' gropes about in the dark, crying, 'Where are thy lips?' There is a kind of animal ferocity in her love. She sends her husband off by an improvised comedy; then skipping about like a dancing girl, cries out:

'Go husband, and come up, friend: just the buckets in the well; the absence of one brings the other.' 'But I hope, like them too, they will not meet in the way, jostle, and clash together.'[3]

Surprised in *flagrante delicto*, and having confessed all to her cousin, as soon as she sees a chance of safety, she swallows her avowal with the effrontery of an actress:—

'*Eliza.* Well, cousin, this, I confess, was reasonable hypocrisy; you were the better for 't.

Olivia. What hypocrisy?

E. Why, this last deceit of your husband was lawful, since in your own defence.

O. What deceit? I'd have you know I never deceived my husband.

E. You do not understand me, sure; I say, this was an honest come-off, and a good one. But 'twas a sign your gallant had had enough of your conversation, since he could so dexterously cheat your husband in passing for a woman.

O. What d'ye mean, once more, with my gallant, and passing for a woman?

E. What do you mean? you see your husband took him for a woman!

O. Whom?

[1] *The Plain Dealer*, ii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 2. [3] *Ibid.*

E. Heyday! why, the man he found you with. . . .

O. Lord, you rave sure!

E. Why, did you not tell me last night. . . . Fy, this fooling is so insipid, 'tis offensive.

O. And fooling with my honour will be more offensive. . . .

E. O admirable confidence! . . .

O. Confidence, to me! to me such language! nay, then I'll never see your face again. . . . Lettice, where are you? Let us begone from this censorious ill woman. . . .

E. One word first, pray, madam; can you swear that whom your husband found you with . . .

O. Swear! ay, that whosoever 'twas that stole up, unknown, into my room, when 'twas dark, I know not, whether man or woman, by heavens, by all that's good; or, may I never more have joys here, or in the other world! Nay, may I eternally—

E. Be damned. So, so, you are damned enough already by your oaths. . . . Yet take this advice with you, in this plain-dealing age, to leave off forswearing yourself. . . .

O. O hideous, hideous advice! let us go out of the hearing of it. She will spoil us, Lettice.'[1]

Here is animation; and if I dared relate the boldness and the asseveration in the night scene, it would easily appear that Mme. Marneffe[2] had a sister, and Balzac a predecessor.

There is a character who shows in a concise manner Wycherley's talent and his morality, wholly formed of energy and indelicacy,—Manly, the 'plain dealer,' so manifestly the author's favourite, that his contemporaries gave him the name of his hero for a surname. Manly is copied after Alceste, and the great difference between the two heroes shows the difference between the two societies and the two countries.[3] Manly is not a courtier, but a ship-captain, with the bearing of a sailor of the time, his cloak stained with tar, and smelling of brandy,[4] ready with blows or foul oaths, calling those he came across dogs and slaves, and when they displeased him, kicking them down stairs. And he speaks in this fashion to a lord with a voice like a mastiff. Then, when the poor nobleman tries to whisper something in his ear,

'My lord, all that you have made me know by your whispering which I knew not before, is that you have a stinking breath; there's a secret for your secret.'

[1] *The Plain Dealer*, v. 1.

[2] See note 2, p. 256.

[3] Compare with the sayings of Alceste, in Molière's *Misanthrope*, such tirades as this: 'Such as you, like common whores and pickpockets, are only dangerous to those you embrace.' And with the character of Philinte, in the same French play, such phrases as these: 'But, faith, could you think I was a friend to those I hugged, kissed, flattered, bowed to? When their backs were turned, did not I tell you they were rogues, villains, rascals, whom I despised and hated?'

[4] Olivia says: 'I shall not have again my alcove smell like a cabin, my chamber perfumed with his tarpaulin Brandenburgh; and hear vollies of brandy sighs, enough to make a fog in one's room.—*The Plain Dealer*, ii. 1.

When he is in Olivia's drawing-room, with 'these fluttering parrots of the town, these apes, these echoes of men,' he bawls out as if he were on his quarter-deck, 'Peace, you Bartholomew, fair buffoons! He seizes them by the collar, and says:

'Why, you impudent, pitiful wretches, . . . you are in all things so like women, that you may think it in me a kind of cowardice to beat you. Begone, I say. . . . No chattering, baboons; instantly begone, or' . . .

Then he turns them out of the room. These are the manners of a plain-dealing man. He has been ruined by Olivia, whom he loves, and who dismisses him. Poor Fidelia, disguised as a man, and whom he takes for a timid youth, comes and finds him while he is venting his anger:

'*F.* I warrant you, sir; for, at worst, I could beg or steal for you.
M. Nay, more bragging! . . . You said you'd beg for me.
F. I did, sir.
M. Then you shall beg for me.
F. With all my heart, sir.
M. That is, pimp for me.
F. How, sir?
M. D'ye start? . . . No more dissembling: here, (I say,) you must go use it for me to Olivia. . . . Go, flatter, lie, kneel, promise, anything to get her for me: I cannot live unless I have her.'[1]

And when Fidelia returns to him, saying that Olivia has embraced him, by force, with an abandonment of love, he exclaims:

'Her love!—a whore's, a witch's love!—But what, did she not kiss well, sir? I'm sure, I thought her lips—but I must not think of 'em more—but yet they are such I could still kiss,—grow to,—and then tear off with my teeth, grind 'em into mammocks, and spit 'em into her cuckold's face.'[2]

These savage words indicate savage actions. He goes by night to enter Olivia's house with Fidelia, and under her name; and Fidelia tries to prevent him, through jealousy. Then his blood boils, a storm of fury mounts to his face, and he speaks to her in a whispering, hissing voice:

'What, you are my rival, then! and therefore you shall stay, and keep the door for me, whilst I go in for you; but when I'm gone, if you dare to stir off from this very board, or breathe the least murmuring accent, I'll cut her throat first; and if you love her, you will not venture her life.—Nay, then I'll cut your throat too, and I know you love your own life at least. . . . Not a word more, lest I begin my revenge on her by killing you.'[3]

He knocks over the husband, another traitor, seizes from Olivia the casket of jewels he had given her, casts her one or two of them, saying, 'Here, madam, I never yet left my wench unpaid,' and gives this same casket to Fidelia, whom he marries. All these actions then appeared natural. Wycherley took to himself in his dedication the title of his hero, *Plain Dealer;* he fancied he had drawn the portrait of a frank,

[1] *The Plain Dealer*, iii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 1. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 2.

honest man, and praised himself for having set the public a fine example; he had only given them the model of an avowed and energetic brute. That was all that was left of manliness in this pitiable world. Wycherley deprived man of his ill-fitting French cloak, and displayed him with his framework of muscles, and in his naked shamelessness.

And in their midst, a great poet, blind, and fallen, his soul saddened by the misery of the times, thus depicted the madness of the infernal rout:

> 'Belial came last, than whom a spirit more lewd
> Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love
> Vice for itself . . . who more oft than he
> In temples and at altars, when the priest
> Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who fill'd
> With lust and violence the house of God?
> In courts and palaces he also reigns,
> And in luxurious cities, where the noise
> Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,
> And injury, and outrage: and when night
> Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.'[1]

2. The Worldlings.

I.

In the seventeenth century a new mode of life was inaugurated in Europe, the worldly, which soon took the lead of and shaped every other. In France especially, and in England, it appeared and gained ground, from the same causes and at the same time.

In order to people the drawing-rooms, a certain political condition is necessary; and this condition, which is the supremacy of the king in combination with a regular system of police, was established at the same period on both sides of the Channel. A regular police brings about peace among men, draws them out of their feudal independence and provincial isolation, increases and facilitates intercommunication, confidence, union, conveniences, and pleasures. The kingly supremacy calls into existence a court, the centre of intercourse, from which all favours flow, and which calls for a display of pleasure and splendour. The aristocracy thus attracted to one another, and attracted to the throne by security, curiosity, amusement, and interest, meet together, and become at once men of the world and men of the court. They are no longer, like the barons of a preceding age, standing in their lofty halls, armed and stern, possessed by the idea that they might perhaps, when they quit their palace, cut each other to pieces, and that if they fall to blows in the precincts of the court, the executioner is ready to cut off their hand and stop the bleeding with a red-hot iron; knowing, more-

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book i. *v.* 490–502.

over, that the king may probably have them beheaded to-morrow, and ready accordingly to cast themselves on their knees and break out into protestations of faithful submissiveness, but counting under their breath the number of swords that will be mustered on their side, and the trusty men who keep sentinel behind the drawbridge of their castles.[1] The rights, privileges, constraints, and attractions of feudal life have disappeared. There is no more need that the manor should be a fortress. These men can no longer experience the joy of reigning there as in a petty state. It has palled on them, and they quit it. Having no further cause to quarrel with the king, they go to him. His court is a drawing-room, most agreeable to the sight, and most serviceable to those who frequent it. Here are festivities, splendid furniture, a decked and chosen company, news and tittle-tattle; here they find pensions, titles, places for them and theirs; they receive both amusement and profit; it is all gain and all pleasure. Here they attend the levée, assist at dinners, return to the ball, sit down to play, are there when the king goes to bed. Here they cut a dash with their half-French dress, their wigs, their hats loaded with feathers, their trunk-hose, their cannions, the large rosettes on their shoes. The ladies paint and patch their faces, display robes of magnificent satin and velvet, laced up with silver and dragging behind, and above you may see their white busts, whose brilliant nakedness is extended to their shoulders and arms. They are gazed upon, saluted, approached. The king rides on horseback to Hyde Park; by his side canter the queen, and with her the two mistresses, Lady Castlemaine and Mrs. Stewart: 'the queen in a white-laced waistcoate and a crimson short pettycoate, and her hair dressed *à la négligence;* . . . Mrs. Stewart with her hat cocked and a red plume, with her sweet eye, little Roman nose, and excellent taille.'[2] Then they returned to Whitehall, 'where all the ladies walked, talking and fiddling with their hats and feathers, and changing and trying one another's by one another's heads, and laughing.'[3] In such fine company there was no lack of gallantry. Perfumed gloves, pocket mirrors, work-boxes fitted up, apricot paste, essences, and other little love-tokens, came over every week from Paris. London furnished more substantial gifts, ear-rings, diamonds, brilliants, and golden guineas; the fair ones put up with these, as if they had come from a greater distance.[4] Intrigues abounded—Heaven knows how many or of what kind. Naturally, also, conversation takes a similar tone. They did not mince the adventures of Miss Warmestré the haughty, who, 'deceived apparently by a bad reckoning, took the liberty of lying-in in the midst of the court.'[5] They spoke in whispers about the attempts of Miss Hobart, or the happy misfortune of Miss Churchill, who, being very plain, but having

[1] Consult all Shakespeare's historical plays.
[2] *Pepys' Diary,* ii. July 13, 1663.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Mémoires de Grammont,* by A. Hamilton.
[5] *Ibid.* ch. ix.

the wit to fall from her horse, touched the eyes and heart of the Duke of York. The Chevalier de Grammont related to the king the history of Termes, or of Poussatin the almoner: every one leaves the dance to hear it; and when it is over, every one bursts out laughing. We perceive that this is not the world of Louis XIV., and yet it is a world; and if it has more froth, it runs with the identical current. The great object here also is selfish amusement, and to put on appearances; people strive to be men of fashion; a coat gives glory. Grammont was in despair when the roguery of his valet obliged him to wear the same suit twice over. Another courtier piques himself on his songs and his guitar-playing. 'Russell had a collection of two or three hundred quadrilles in tablature, all of which he used to dance without ever having studied them.' Jermyn was known for his success with the fair. 'A gentleman,' said Etheredge, 'ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a talent for love-letters, a pleasant voice in a room, to be always very amorous, sufficiently discreet, but not too constant.' These are already the court manners as they continued in France up to the time of Louis XVI. With such manners, words take the place of deeds. Life is passed in visits and conversations. The art of conversing became the chief of all; of course, to converse agreeably, to employ an hour, twenty subjects in an hour, hinting always, without going deep, in such a fashion that conversation should not be a labour, but a promenade. It was followed up by letters written in the evening, by madrigals or epigrams to be read in the morning, by drawing-room tragedies, or caricatures of society. In this manner a new literature was produced, the work and the portrait of the world, which was at once its audience and its model, which sprung from it, and ended in it.

II.

The art of conversation being then a necessity, people set themselves to acquire it. A revolution was effected in mind as well as in manners. As soon as circumstances assume new aspects, thought assumes a new form. The Renaissance is ended, the Classic Age begins, and the artist makes room for the author. Man is returned from his first voyage round the world of facts; the enthusiasm, the labour of a stirred imagination, the tumultuous sensation of new ideas, all the faculties which a first discovery calls into play, have become satiated, then depressed. The incentive is blunted, because the work is done. The strangeness, the far vistas, the unbridled originality, the all-powerful flights of genius aimed at the centre of truth through the extremes of folly, all the characteristics of the great discovery, are lost to sight. The imagination is tempered; the mind is disciplined: it retraces its steps; it walks its own domain once more with a satisfied curiosity, an acquired experience. Judgment, as it were, chews the cud and corrects itself. It finds a religion, an art, a philosophy, to reform or to form anew. It is no longer the minister of inspired intuition, but of a regular process of

decomposition. It no longer feels or looks for the generality; it handles and observes the specialty. It selects and classifies; it refines and regulates. It ceases to be the creator, and becomes the commentator. It quits the province of invention and settles down into criticism. It enters upon that magnificent and confused aggregate of dogmas and forms, in which the preceding age has gathered up indiscriminately its dreams and discoveries; it draws thence the ideas which it modifies and verifies. It arranges them in long chains of simple ratiocination, which descend link by link to the vulgar apprehension. It expresses them in exact terms, which present a graduated series, step by step, to the vulgar reasoning power. It marks out in the entire field of thought a series of compartments and a network of passages, which, excluding error and digression, lead gradually every mind to every object. It becomes at last clear, convenient, charming. And the world lends its aid; contingent circumstances finish the natural revolution; the taste becomes changed through a declivity of its own, but also through the influence of the court. When conversation becomes the chief business of life, it modifies style after its own image, and according to its peculiar needs. It repudiates digression, excessive metaphor, impassioned exclamations, all loose and overstrained ways. We cannot bawl, gesticulate, dream aloud, in a drawing-room; we restrain ourselves; we criticise and keep watch over ourselves; we pass the time in narration and discussion; we stand in need of concise expression, exact language, clear and connected reasoning; otherwise we cannot fence or comprehend each other. Correct style, good language, conversation, are self-generated, and very quickly perfected; for refinement is the aim of the man of the world: he studies to render everything more becoming and more serviceable, his chattels and his speech, his periods and his dress. Art and artifice are there the distinguishing mark. People pride themselves on being perfect in their mother tongue, never to miss the correct sense of any word, to avoid vulgar expressions, to string together their antitheses, to develop their thoughts, to employ rhetoric. Nothing is more marked than the contrast of the conversations of Shakspeare and Fletcher with those of Wycherley and Congreve. In Shakspeare the dialogue resembles an assault of arms; we could imagine men of skill fencing with words as it were in a fencing-school. They play the buffoon, sing, think aloud, burst out into a laugh, into puns, into fishwomen's talk and into poets' talk, into quaint whimsicalities; they have a taste for the ridiculous, the sparkling; one of them dances while he speaks; they would willingly walk on their hands; there is not one grain of calculation to more than three grains of folly in their heads. Here, on the other hand, the characters are steady; they reason and dispute; ratiocination is the basis of their style; they are so perfect that the thing is overdone, and we see through it all the author stringing his phrases. They arrange a tableau, multiply ingenious comparisons, balance well-ordered periods. One character delivers a satire, another serves up a

little essay on morality. We might draw from the comedies of the time a volume of sentences; they are charged with literary morsels which foreshadow the *Spectator*.[1] They hunt for clever and humorous expressions, they clothe indecent circumstances with decent words; they skip nimbly over the fragile ice of decorum, and leave their mark without breaking it. I see gentlemen, seated in gilt arm-chairs, of quiet wit and studied speech, cool in observation, eloquent sceptics, expert in the fashions, lovers of elegance; dainty of fine talk as much from vanity as from taste, who, while conversing between a compliment and a reverence, will no more neglect their good style than their neat gloves or their hat.

III.

Amongst the best and most agreeable specimens of this new refinement, appears Sir William Temple, a diplomatist and man of the world, prudent, wise, and polite, gifted with tact in conversation and in business, expert in the knowledge of the times, and in not compromising himself, adroit in pressing forward and in standing aside, who knew how to attract to himself the favour and the expectations of England, to obtain the eulogies of men of letters, of savants, of politicians, of the people, to gain a European reputation, to win all the crowns appropriated to science, patriotism, virtue, genius, without having too much of science, patriotism, genius, or virtue. Such a life is the masterpiece of that age: fine externals on a foundation not so fine; this is its abstract. His mode as an author agrees with his maxims as a politician. His principles and style are homogeneous; a genuine diplomatist, such as one meets in the drawing-rooms, having probed Europe and touched everywhere the bottom of things; tired of everything, specially of enthusiasm, admirable in an arm-chair or at a levee, a good story-teller, waggish if need were, but in moderation, accomplished in the art of maintaining the dignity of his station and of enjoying himself. In his retreat at Sheen, afterwards at Moor Park, he employs his leisure in writing; and he writes as a man of his rank would speak, very well, that is to say, with dignity and facility, particularly when he writes of the countries he has visited, of the incidents he has seen, the noble amusements which serve to pass his time.[2] He has an income of fifteen hundred a year, and a nice sinecure in Ireland. He retired from public life during momentous struggles, siding neither with the king nor against him, resolved, as he tells us himself, not to set himself against the current when the current is irresistible. He lives peacefully in the country with his wife, his sister, his secretary, his dependants, receiving the visits of strangers, who are anxious to see the negotiator

[1] Take, for example, Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem*, ii. 1.

[2] Consult especially, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands; Of Gardening.*

of the Triple Alliance, and sometimes of the new King William, who, unable to obtain his services, comes occasionally to seek his counsel. He plants and gardens, in a fertile soil, in a country the climate of which agrees with him, amongst regular flower-beds, by the side of a very straight canal, bordered by a straight terrace; and he lauds himself in set terms, and with suitable discreetness, for the character he possesses and the part he has chosen:—

'I have often wondered how such sharp and violent invectives come to be made so generally against Epicurus, by the ages that followed him, whose admirable wit, felicity of expression, excellence of nature, sweetness of conversation, temperance of life and constancy of death, made him so beloved by his friends, admired by his scholars, and honoured by the Athenians.'[1]

He does well to defend Epicurus, because he has followed his precepts, avoiding every great disorder of the intelligence, and installing himself, like one of Lucretius' gods, in the interspace of worlds; as he says:

'Where factions were once entered and rooted in a state, they thought it madness for good men to meddle with public affairs.'

And again:

'The true service of the public is a business of so much labour and so much care, that though a good and wise man may not refuse it, if he be called to it by his Prince or his country, and thinks he may be of more than vulgar use, yet he will seldom or never seek it; but leaves it commonly to men who, under the disguise of public good, pursue their own designs of wealth, power, and such bastard honours as usually attend them, not that which is the true, and only true, reward of virtue.'[2]

This is how he reveals himself. Thus presented to us, he goes on to talk of the gardening which he practises, and first of the six grand Epicureans who have illustrated the doctrine of their master—Cæsar, Atticus, Lucretius, Horace, Mæcenas, Virgil; then of the various sorts of gardens which have a name in the world, from the garden of Eden, and the garden of Alcinous, to those of Holland and Italy; and all this at some length, like a man who listens to himself and is listened to by others, who does rather profusely the honours of his house and of his wit to his guests, but does them with grace and dignity, not dogmatically nor haughtily, but in varied tones, aptly modulating his voice and gestures. He recounts the four kinds of grapes which he has introduced into England, and confesses that he has been extravagant, yet does not regret it; for five years he has not once wished to see London. He intersperses technical advice with anecdotes; whereof one relates to Charles II., who praised the English climate above all others, saying:

'He thought that was the best climate, where he could be abroad in the air with pleasure, or at least without trouble or inconvenience, the most days of the year, and the most hours of the day.'

Another about the Bishop of Munster, who, unable to grow anything

[1] Temple's Works: *Of Gardening*, ii. 190. [2] *Ibid.* 184.

but cherries in his orchard, had collected all the varieties, and so perfected the trees that he had fruit from May to September. The reader feels an inward gratification when he hears an eyewitness relate minute details of such great men. Our attention is aroused immediately; we in consequence imagine ourselves denizens of the court, and smile complacently: no matter if the details be slender; they serve passably well, they constitute 'a half hour with the aristocracy,' like a lordly way of taking snuff, or shaking the lace of one's ruffles. Such is the interest of courtly conversation; it can be held about nothing; the excellence of the manner lends this nothing a peculiar charm; you hear the sound of the voice, you are amused by the half smile, abandon yourself to the fluent stream, forget that these are ordinary ideas; you observe the narrator, his wig, the cane he toys with, the ribbons on his shoes, his easy walk over the smooth gravel of his garden paths between the faultless hedges; the ear, the mind even is charmed, captivated by the appropriateness of his diction, by the abundance of his ornate periods, by the dignity and fulness of a style which is involuntarily regular, which, at first artificial, like good breeding, ends, like true good breeding, by being changed into a real necessity and a natural talent.

Unfortunately, this talent occasionally leads to blunders; when a man speaks well about everything, he thinks he has a right to speak of everything. He plays philosopher, critic, even man of learning; and indeed becomes so actually, at least with the ladies. Such a man writes, like Temple, *Essays on the Nature of Government*, on *Heroic Virtue*,[1] on poetry; that is, little treatises on society, on the beautiful, on the philosophy of history. He is the Locke, the Herder, the Bentley of the drawing-room, and nothing else. Now and then, doubtless, his mother wit leads him to fair original judgments. Temple was the first to discover a Pindaric glow in the old chant of Ragnar Lodbrog, and to place Don Quixote in the first rank of modern fictions; and moreover, when he handles a subject within his range, like the causes of the power and decline of the Turks, his reasoning is admirable. But otherwise, he is simply the scholar; nay, in him the pedant crops out, and the worst of pedants, who, being ignorant, wishes to seem wise, who quotes the history of every land, hauling in Jupiter, Saturn, Osiris, Fo-hi, Confucius, Manco-Capac, Mahomet, and discourses on all these obscure and unknown civilisations, as if he had laboriously studied them, on his own behalf, at their source, and not at second hand, through the extracts of his secretary, or the books of others. One day he came to grief; having plunged into a literary dispute, and claimed superiority for the ancients over the moderns, he imagined himself a Hellenist, an antiquarian, related the voyages of Pythagoras, the education of Orpheus, and remarked that the Greek sages

[1] Compare this essay with that of Carlyle, on *Heroes and Hero-Worship*; the title and subject are similar; it is curious to note the difference of the two centuries.

'were commonly excellent poets, and great physicians: they were so learned in natural philosophy, that they foretold not only eclipses in the heavens, but earthquakes at land and storms at sea, great droughts and great plagues, much plenty or much scarcity of certain sorts of fruits or grain; not to mention the magical powers attributed to several of them, to allay storms, to raise gales, to appease commotions of people, to make plagues cease.'[1]

Admirable faculties, which we no longer possess. Again he regretted the decay of music, 'by which men and beasts, fishes, fowls, and serpents, were so frequently enchanted, and their very natures changed; by which the passions of men were raised to the greatest height and violence, and then as suddenly appeased, so as they might be justly said to be turned into lions or lambs, into wolves or into harts, by the powers and charms of this admirable art.'[2] He wished to enumerate the greatest modern writers, and forgot to mention in his catalogue, 'amongst the Italians,[3] Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso; in his list of French, Pascal, Bossuet, Molière, Corneille, Racine, and Boileau; in his list of Spaniards, Lope and Calderon; and in his list of English, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton;' though, by way of compensation, he inserted the names of Paolo Sarpi, Guevara, Sir Philip Sidney, Selden, Voiture, and Bussy-Rabutin, 'author of the *Amours de Gaul*.' To cap all, he declared the fables of Æsop a dull Byzantine compilation, and the letters of Phalaris a wretched sophistical forgery, admirable and authentic:—

'It may perhaps be further affirmed, in favour of the ancients, that the oldest books we have are still in their kind the best. The two most ancient that I know of in prose, among those we call profane authors, are Æsop's *Fables* and Phalaris' *Epistles*, both living near the same time, which was that of Cyrus and Pythagoras. As the first has been agreed by all ages since for the greatest master in his kind, and all others of that sort have been but imitations of his original; so I think the *Epistles of Phalaris* to have more grace, more spirit, more force of wit and genius, than any others I have ever seen, either ancient or modern.'

And then, in order to commit himself beyond remedy, he gravely remarked:

'I know several learned men (or that usually pass for such, under the name of critics) have not esteemed them genuine, and Politian with some others have attributed them to Lucian; but I think he must have little skill in painting that cannot find out this to be an original: such diversity of passions, upon such variety of actions and passages of life and government, such freedom of thought, such boldness of expression, such bounty to his friends, such scorn of his enemies, such honour of learned men, such esteem of good, such knowledge of life, such contempt of death, with such fierceness of nature and cruelty of revenge, could never be represented but by him that possessed them; and I esteem Lucian to have been no more capable of writing than of acting what Phalaris did. In all one writ, you find the scholar or the sophist; and in all the other, the tyrant and the commander.'[4]

[1] Temple's Works, ii: *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, 155
[2] *Ibid.* 165. [3] Macaulay's Works, vi. 319; *Essay on Sir William Temple*
[4] *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, 173.

Fine rhetoric truly; it is sad that a passage so aptly turned should cover so many stupidities. All this appeared very triumphant; and the universal applause with which this fine oratorical bombast was greeted demonstrates the taste and the culture, the hollowness and the politeness, of the elegant world of which Temple was the marvel, and which, like Temple, loved only the varnish of truth.

IV.

Such were the ornate and polished manners which gradually pierce through debauchery and assume the ascendant. Insensibly the current grows clearer, and marks out its course like a stream, which forcibly entering a new bed, moves with difficulty at first through a heap of mud, then pushes forward its still murky waters, which are purified little by little. These debauchees try to be men of the world, and sometimes succeed in it. Wycherley writes well, very clearly, without the least trace of euphuism, almost in the French manner. He makes Dapperwit say of Lucy, in measured phrase, 'She is beautiful without affectation, amorous without impertinence, . . . frolic without rudeness.'[1] When he desires it he is ingenious, and his gentlemen exchange happy comparisons. 'Mistresses,' says one, 'are like books: if you pore upon them too much, they doze you, and make you unfit for company; but if used discreetly, you are the fitter for conversation by 'em.' 'Yes,' says another, 'a mistress should be like a little country retreat near the town; not to dwell in constantly, but only for a night and away, to taste the town the better when a man returns.'[2] These folk have style, even out of place, and in spite of the situation or condition of the persons. A shoemaker in one of Etheredge's plays says: 'There is never a man in the town lives more like a gentleman with his wife than I do. I never mind her motions; she never inquires into mine. We speak to one another civilly, hate one another heartily.' There is perfect art in this little speech; everything is complete, even to the symmetrical antithesis of words, ideas, sounds: what a fine talker is this same satirical shoemaker! After a satire, a madrigal. In one place a certain character exclaims, in the very middle of a dialogue, and in sober prose, 'Pretty pouting lips, with a little moisture hanging on them, that look like the Province rose fresh on the bush, ere the morning sun has quite drawn up the dew.' Is not this the graceful gallantry of the court? Rochester himself sometimes might furnish a parallel. Two or three of his songs are still to be found in the expurgated books of extracts in use amongst modest young girls. It matters nothing that such men are really scamps; they must be every moment using compliments and salutations: before women whom they wish to seduce they are compelled to warble tender words and insipidities: they acknowledge but one check, the necessity to appear well-bred; yet this check suffices to restrain them. Rochester

[1] *Love in a Wood*, iii. 2. [2] *The Country Wife*, i. 1.

is correct even in the midst of his filth; if he talks lewdly, it is in the able and exact manner of Boileau. All these roisterers aim at being wits and men of the world. Sir Charles Sedley ruins and polishes himself, but Charles II. calls him 'the viceroy of Apollo.' Buckingham extols 'the magic of his style.' He is the most charming, the most sought after of talkers; he makes puns and verses, always agreeable, sometimes refined; he handles dexterously the pretty jargon of mythology; he insinuates into his airy, flowing verses all the dainty and somewhat affected prettinesses of the drawing-room. He sings thus to Chloris:

'My passion with your beauty grew,
While Cupid at my heart,
Still as his mother favour'd you,
Threw a new flaming dart.'

And then sums up:

'Each gloried in their wanton part:
To make a lover, he
Employ'd the utmost of his art;
To make a beauty, she.'[1]

There is no love whatever in these pretty things; they are received as they are presented, with a smile; they form part of the conventional language, the polite attentions due from gentlemen to ladies. I suppose they would send them in the morning with a nosegay, or a box of preserved fruits. Roscommon indites some verses on a dead lapdog, on a young lady's cold; this naughty cold prevents her singing—cursed be the winter! And hereupon he takes the winter to task, abuses it at length. Here you have the literary amusements of the worldling. They first treat love, then danger, most airily and gaily. On the eve of a naval contest, Dorset, at sea, amidst the pitching of his vessel, addresses a celebrated song to the ladies. There is nothing weighty in it, either sentiment or wit; people hum the couplets as they pass; they emit a gleam of gaiety; the next moment they are forgotten. Dorset at sea writes to the ladies, on the night before an engagement:

'Let's hear of no inconstancy,
We have too much of *that* at sea.'

And again:

'Should foggy Opdam chance to know
Our sad and dismal story,
The Dutch would scorn so weak a foe,
And quit their fort at Goeree.
For what resistance can they find
From men who've left their hearts behind?'

Then come jests too much in the English style:

'Then if we write not by each post,
Think not we are unkind; . . .

[1] Sir Charles Sedley's Works, ed. Briscoe, 1778, 2 vols.: *The Mulberry Garden*, ii

Our tears we'll send a speedier way;
The tide shall bring them twice a day.'

Such tears can hardly flow from sorrow; the lady regards them as the lover sheds them, good-naturedly. She is 'at a play' (he thinks so, and tells her so):

'Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
Sit careless at a play,
Perhaps permit some happier man
To kiss your hand, or flirt your fan.'[1]

Dorset hardly troubles himself about it, plays with poetry without excess or assiduity, with a rapid pen, writing to-day a verse against Dorinda, to-morrow a satire against Mr. Howard, always easily and without study, like a true gentleman. He is an earl, a chamberlain, and rich; he pensions and patronises poets as he would flirts—to amuse himself, without binding himself. The Duke of Buckingham does the same, and also the contrary; caresses these, parodies those; is flattered, mocked, and ends by receiving his portrait at Dryden's hands,—a *chef d'œuvre*, but not flattering. We have seen such pastimes and such bickerings in France; we find here the same manners and the same literature, because we find here also the same society and the same spirit.

Among these poets, and in the front rank, is Edmund Waller, who lived and wrote in this manner to his eighty-second year: a man of wit and fashion, well-bred, familiar from his youth with great people, endued with tact and foresight, quick at repartee, not easy to put out of countenance, but selfish, of indifferent feelings, having changed sides more than once, and bearing very well the memory of his tergiversations; in short, a good model of the worldling and the courtier. It was he who, having once praised Cromwell, and afterward Charles II., but the latter more feebly than the former, said by way of excuse: 'Poets, your Majesty, succeed better in fiction than in truth.' In this kind of existence, three-quarters of the poetry is written for the occasion; it is the small change of conversation or flattery; it resembles the little events or the little sentiments from which it sprang. One piece is written on tea, another on the queen's portrait; it is necessary to pay one's court; moreover, 'His Majesty has requested some verses.' One lady makes him a present of a silver pen, straight he throws his gratitude into rhyme; another has the power of sleeping at will, straight a sportive stanza; a false report is spread that she has just had her portrait painted, straight a copy of verses on this grave affair. A little further on there are verses to the Countess of Carlisle on her chamber, condolences to my Lord of Northumberland on the death of his wife, a pretty thing on a lady 'passing through a crowd of people,' an answer, verse for verse, to some rhymes of Sir John Suckling. He seizes anything frivolous, new, or convenient, on the wing; and his poetry is only

[1] *Works of the Earls of Rochester, Roscommon, and Dorset*, 2 vols., 1731, ii. 54

a written conversation,—I mean the conversation which goes on at a ball, when people speak for the sake of speaking, lifting a lock of one's wig, or twisting about a glove. Gallantry, as he confesses, holds the chief place here, and one may be pretty certain that the love is not over-sincere. In fact, Waller sighs on purpose (Sacharissa had a fine dowry), or at least for the sake of good manners; that which is most evident in his tender poems is, that he aims at a flowing style and good rhymes. He is affected, he exaggerates, he strains after wit, he is always an author. Not venturing to address Sacharissa herself, he addresses Mrs. Braghton, her attendant, 'his fellow-servant:'

> 'So, in those nations which the Sun adore,
> Some modest Persian, or some weak-eyed Moor,
> No higher dares advance his dazzled sight
> Than to some gilded cloud, which near the light
> Of their ascending god adorns the east.
> And, graced with his beam, outshines the rest.'[1]

A fine comparison! That is a well-made courtesy; I hope Sacharissa responds with one equally correct. His despairs bear the same flavour; he pierces the groves of Penshurst with his cries, 'reports his flame to the beeches,' and the well-bred beeches 'bow their heads, as if they felt the same.'[2] It is probable that, in these mournful walks, his greatest care was lest he should wet the soles of his high-heeled shoes. These transports of love bring in the classic machinery, Apollo and the Muses. Apollo is annoyed that one of his servants is ill-treated, and bids him depart; and he departs, telling Sacharissa that she is harder than an oak, and that she was certainly produced from a rock.[3]

There is one genuine reality in all this—sensuality; not ardent, but light and gay. There is a certain piece, *The Fall*, which an abbé of the court of Louis XV. might have written:

[1] *The Poets of Great Britain*, ed. R. Anderson, 14 vols., 1792, v.; Waller Epistle x. 478.

[2] *Ibid.* 452.

[3] 'While in this park I sing, the list'ning deer
Attend my passion, and forget to fear;
When to the beeches I report my flame,
They bow their heads, as if they felt the same.
To gods appealing, when I reach their bow'rs
With loud complaints, they answer me in show'rs.
To thee a wild and cruel soul is giv'n,
More deaf than trees, and prouder than the heav'n.
. . . The rock,
That cloven rock, produc'd thee. . . .
This last complaint th' indulgent ears did pierce
Of just Apollo, president of verse;
Highly concerned that the Muse should bring
Damage to one whom he had taught to sing.'—*Ibid.* p. 452.

'Then blush not, Fair! or on him frown, . . .
How could the youth, alas! but bend
When his whole Heav'n upon him lean'd;
If aught by him amiss were done,
'Twas that he let you rise so soon.'[1]

Other pieces smack of their surroundings, and are not so polished:

'Amoret! as sweet, as good,
As the most delicious food,
Which but tasted does impart
Life and gladness to the heart.'[2]

I should not be pleased, were I a woman, to be compared to a beef-steak, though that be appetising; nor should I like any more to find myself, like Sacharissa, placed on a level with good wine, which flies to the head:

'Sacharissa's beauty's wine,
Which to madness doth incline;
Such a liquor as no brain
That is mortal can sustain.'[3]

This is too much honour for port wine and meat. The English background crops up here and elsewhere; for example, the beautiful Sacharissa, having ceased to be beautiful, asked Waller if he would write again verses for her; he answered, 'Yes, madame, when you are as young and as handsome as you were formerly.' Here is something to shock a Frenchman. Nevertheless Waller is usually amiable; a sort of brilliant light floats like a halo round his verses; he is always elegant, often graceful. His gracefulness is like the perfume exhaled from the world; fresh toilettes, ornamented drawing-rooms, the abundance and all those refined and delicate comforts give to the soul a sort of sweetness which is breathed forth in obliging compliments and smiles. Waller has such, and that most flattering, apropos of a bud, a girdle, a rose. Such bouquets become his hands and his art. He pays an excellent compliment 'To young Lady Lucy Sidney' on her age. And what could be more attractive for a denizen of the drawing-rooms, than this bud of still unopened youth, but which blushes already, and is on the point of expanding?

'Yet, fairest blossom! do not slight
That age which you may know so soon.
The rosy morn resigns her light
And milder glory to the noon.'[4]

All his verses flow with a continuous harmony, clearness, facility, though his voice is never raised, or out of tune, or rough, nor loses its true accent, except by the worldling's affectation, which regularly varies all tones in order to soften them. His poetry resembles one

[1] *The Poets of Great Britain*, Waller, v. 456.
[2] *Ibid.* 479. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

of those pretty, affected, bedizened women, busy in inclining their head on one side, and murmuring with a soft voice commonplace things which they cannot be said to think, yet agreeable in their beribboned dress, and who would please altogether if they did not dream of always pleasing.

It is not that these men cannot handle grave subjects; but they handle them in their own fashion, without gravity or depth. What the courtier most lacks is the genuine sentiment of a discovered and personal idea. That which interests him most is the correctness of the adornment, and the perfection of external form. They care little for the foundation, much for the outer shape. In fact, it is form which they take for their subject in nearly all their serious poetry; they are critics, they lay down precepts, they compose Poetic Arts. Denham, and afterwards Roscommon, teach in complete poems the art of translating poetry well The Duke of Buckingham versified an *Essay on Poetry*, and an *Essay on Satire*. Dryden is in the first rank of these pedagogues. Like Dryden again, they turn translators, amplifiers. Roscommon translated the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, Waller the first act of *Pompée*, Denham some fragments of Homer and Virgil, and an Italian poem on *Justice and Temperance*. Rochester composed a satire against *Mankind*, in the style of Boileau, and also an epistle on *Nothing;* the amorous Waller wrote a didactic poem on *The Fear of God*, and another in six cantos on *Divine Love*. These are exercises of style. They take a theological thesis, an open question of philosophy, a poetic maxim, and develop it in jointed prose, furnished with rhymes; they discover nothing, invent nothing, feel little, and only aim at expressing good arguments in classical metaphors, in exalted terms, after a conventional model. Most of their verses consist of two nouns, furnished with epithets, and connected by a verb, like one's college Latin verses. The epithet is good: they had to hunt through the Gradus for it, or, as Boileau wills it, they had to carry the line unfinished in their heads, and had to think about it an hour in the open air, until at last, at the corner of a wood, they found the word which had escaped. I yawn, but applaud. At this price a generation ends by forming the sustained style which is necessary to support, make public, and demonstrate great things. Meanwhile, with their ornate, official diction, and their borrowed thought, they are like formal chamberlains, in embroidered coats, present at a royal marriage or an august baptism, empty of head, grave in manner, admirable for dignity and bearing, with the punctilio and the ideas of a dummy.

V.

One of them only (Dryden always excepted) rose to talent, Sir John Denham, Charles the First's secretary. He was employed in public affairs, and after a dissolute youth, turned to serious habits; and leaving behind him satiric verse and party tricks, attained in riper years a lofty oratorical style. His best poem, *Cooper's Hill*, is the description of a

hill and its surroundings, blended with the historical ideas which the sight recalls, and the moral reflections which its appearance naturally suggests. All these subjects are in accordance with the nobility and the limitation of the classical spirit, and display his vigour without betraying his weaknesses; the poet could show off his whole talent without forcing it. His fine language exhibits all its beauty, because it is sincere. We find pleasure in following the regular progress of these copious passages in which his ideas, opposed or combined, attain for the first time their definite place and full clearness, where symmetry only brings out the argument more clearly, expansion only completes thought, antithesis and repetition do not induce trifling and affectation, where the music of the verse, adding the breadth of sound to the fulness of sense, conducts the chain of ideas, without effort or disorder, by an appropriate measure to a becoming order and movement. Gratification is united with solidity; the author of *Cooper's Hill* knows how to please as well as to impress. His poem is like a king's park, dignified and level without doubt, but arranged for the pleasure of the sight, and full of choice prospects. It leads us by easy digressions across a multitude of varied thoughts. It shows us here a mountain, yonder a memorial of the nymphs, a classic memorial, like a portico filled with statues, further on a wide river-course, and by its side the ruins of an abbey; each page of the poem is like a distinct alley, with its distinct perspective. Further on, our thoughts are turned to the superstitions of the ignorant middle-ages, and to the excesses of the recent revolution; then comes the picture of a royal hunt; we see the trembling stag brought to a stand in the midst of the leaves:

> 'He calls to mind his strength, and then his speed,
> His winged heels, and then his armed head;
> With these t' avoid, with that his fate to meet;
> But fear prevails, and bids him trust his feet.
> So fast he flies, that his reviewing eye
> Has lost the chasers, and his ear the cry.'[1]

These are the worthy spectacles and the studied diversity of the grounds of a nobleman. Every object, moreover, receives here, as in a king's palace, all the adornment which can be given to it; elegant epithets are introduced to embellish a feeble substantive; the decorations of art transform the commonplace of nature: vessels are 'floating towers;' the Thames is the most loved of all the Ocean's sons; the airy mountain hides its proud head among the clouds, whilst a shady mantle clothes its sides. Among different kinds of ideas, there is one kingly, full of stately and magnificent ceremonies, of self-contained and studied gestures, of correct yet commanding figures, uniform and imposing like the appointments of a palace; hence the classic writers, and Denham amongst them, draw all their poetic tints. From this every object and

[1] *The Poets of Great Britain*, v. Denham, p. 75.

circumstance takes its colouring, because constrained to come into contact with it. Here the object and circumstances are compelled to traverse other things. Denham is not a mere courtier, he is an Englishman; that is, preoccupied by moral emotions. He often quits his landscape to enter into some grave reflection; politics, religion, come to disturb the enjoyment of his eyes; in reference to a hill or a forest, he meditates upon man; externals lead him inward; impressions of the senses to contemplations of the soul. The men of this race are by nature and custom esoteric. When he sees the Thames throw itself into the sea, he compares it with 'mortal life hasting to meet eternity.' The face of a mountain, beaten by storms, reminds him of 'the common fate of all that's high or great.' The course of the river suggests to him ideas of inner reformation:

> 'O could I flow like thee! and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, though gentle yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full.
>
> But his proud head the airy mountain hides
> Among the clouds; his shoulders and his sides
> A shady mantle clothes; his curled brows
> Frown on the gentle stream, which calmly flows;
> While winds and storms his lofty forehead beat,
> The common fate of all that's high or great.'[1]

There is in the English mind an indestructible stock of moral instincts, and grand melancholy; and it is the greatest confirmation of this, that we can discover such a stock at the court of Charles II.

These are, however, but rare openings, and as it were levellings of the original rock. The habits of the worldling are as a thick layer which cover it throughout. Manners, conversation, style, the stage, taste, all is French, or tries to be; they imitate France as they are able, and go there to mould themselves. Many cavaliers went there, driven away by Cromwell. Denham, Waller, Roscommon, and Rochester resided there; the Duchess of Newcastle, a poetess of the time, was married at Paris; the Duke of Buckingham served a campaign under Turenne; Wycherley was sent to France by his father, who wished to rescue him from the contagion of Puritan opinions; Vanbrugh, one of the best comic playwrights, went thither to contract a polish. The two courts were allied almost always in fact, and always in heart, by a community of interests, and of religious and monarchical ideas. Charles II. accepted from Louis XIV. a pension, a mistress, counsels, and examples; the nobility followed their prince, and France was the model of the English court. Her literature and manners, the finest of the classic age, led the fashion. We perceive in English writings that French authors are their masters, and that they were in the hands of all well-

[1] *The Poets of Great Britain*, v., Denham, 674.

educated people. They consulted Bossuet, translated Corneille, imitated Molière, respected Boileau. It went so far, that the greatest gallants of them tried to be altogether French, to mix some scraps of French in every phrase. 'It is as ill-breeding now to speak good English,' says Wycherley, 'as to write good English, good sense, or a good hand.' These Frenchified coxcombs[1] are compliment-mongers, always powdered, perfumed, 'eminent for being bien gantés.' They affect delicacy, they are fastidious; they find the English coarse, gloomy, stiff; they try to be giddy and thoughtless; they giggle and prate at random, placing the glory of man in the perfection of his wig and his bows. The theatre, which ridicules these imitators, is an imitator after their fashion. French comedy, like French politeness, becomes their model. They copy both, altering without equalling them; for monarchical and classic France is, amongst all nations, the best fitted from its instincts and institutions for the modes of worldly life, and the works of an oratorical mind. England follows it in this course, being carried away by the universal current of the age, but at a distance, and drawn aside by its national peculiarities. It is this common direction and this particular deviation which the society and its poetry have proclaimed, and which the stage and its characters will display.

VI

Four principal writers established this comedy—Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar:[2] the first gross, and in the first irruption of vice; the others more sedate, possessing more a taste for urbanity than debauchery; yet all men of the world, and priding themselves on their good breeding, on passing their days at court or in fine company, on having the tastes and bearing of gentlemen. 'I am not a literary man,' said Congreve to Voltaire, 'I am a gentleman.' In fact, as Pope said, he lived more like a man of quality than a man of letters, was noted for his successes with the fair, and passed his latter years in the house of the Duchess of Marlborough. I have said that Wycherley, under Charles II., was one of the most fashionable courtiers. He served in the army for some time, as did also Vanbrugh and Farquhar; nothing is more gallant than the name of Captain which they employed, the military stories they brought back, and the feather they stuck in their hats. They all wrote comedies on the same worldly and classical model, made up of probable incidents such as we observe around us every day, of well-bred characters such as we commonly meet in a drawing-room, correct and elegant conversations such as well-bred men can carry on. This theatre, wanting in poetry, fancy, and adventures, imitative and discursive, was formed at the same time as that of Molière, by

[1] Etheredge's *Sir Fopling Flutter;* Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing master*, i. 2.

[2] From 1672 to 1726.

the same causes, and on his model, so that in order to comprehend it we must compare it with that of Molière.

'Molière belongs to no nation,' said a great English actor (Kemble); 'one day the god of comedy, wishing to write, became a man, and happened to fall into France.' I accept this saying; but in becoming man he found himself, at the same time, a man of the seventeenth century and a Frenchman, and that is how he was the god of comedy. 'To amuse honest folk,' said Molière, 'what a strange task!' Only the French art of the seventeenth century could succeed in that; for it consists in leading by an agreeable path to general notions; and the taste for these notions, as well as the custom of treading this path, is the peculiar mark of honest folk. Molière, like Racine, expands and develops. Open any one of his plays that comes to hand, and the first scene in it, chosen at random; after three replies you are carried away, or rather led away. The second continues the first, the third carries out the second, the fourth completes all; a current is created which bears us on, which bears us away, which does not release us until it is exhausted. There is no check, no digression, no episodes to distract our attention. To prevent the lapses of an absent mind, a secondary character intervenes, a lackey, a lady's-maid, a wife, who, couplet by couplet, repeat in a different fashion the reply of the principal character, and by means of symmetry and contrast restrain us in the path laid down. Arrived at the end, a second current seizes us and acts like the first. It is composed like the other, and with regard to the other. It throws it out by contrast, or strengthens it by resemblance. Here the valets repeat the dispute, there the reconciliation of their masters. In one place, Alceste, drawn in one direction through three pages by anger, is drawn in a contrary direction, and through three pages, by love. Further on, tradesmen, professors, neighbours, domestics, relieve each other scene after scene, in order to bring out in clearer light the pretentiousness and gullibility of M. Jourdain. Every scene, every act, brings out in greater relief, completes, or prepares another. All is united, and all is simple; the action progresses, and progresses only to carry on the idea; there is no complication, no incidents. One comic event suffices for the story. A dozen conversations make up the play of the *Misanthrope*. The same situation, five or six times renewed, is the whole of *l'Ecole des Femmes*. These pieces are made out of nothing. They have no need of incidents, they find ample space in the compass of one room and one day, without surprises, without decoration, with a carpet and four arm-chairs. This paucity of matter throws out the ideas more clearly and quickly; in fact, their whole aim is to bring those ideas prominently forward; the simplicity of the subject, the progress of the action, the relation of the scenes,—to this everything tends. At every step the clearness increases, the impression is deepened, the viciousness stands out: ridicule is piled up until, before so many apt and united appeals, laughter forces its way and breaks forth. And this laughter

is not a mere outburst of physical amusement; it is the judgment which incites it. The writer is a philosopher, who brings us into contact with a universal truth by a particular example. We understand through him, as through La Bruyère or Nicole, the force of prejudice, the obstinacy of conventionality, the blindness of love. The couplets of his dialogue, like the arguments of their treatises, are but the worked out proof and the logical justification of a preconceived conclusion. We philosophise with him on humanity; we think because he has thought. And he has only thought thus in the character of a Frenchman, for an audience of French men of the world. In him we taste a national pleasure. French refined and systematic intelligence, the most exact in seizing on the subordination of ideas, the most ready in separating ideas from matter, the most fond of clear and tangible ideas, finds in him its nourishment and its echo. None who has sought to show us mankind, has led us by a straighter and easier mode to a more distinct and speaking portrait.

I will add, to a more pleasing portrait,—and this is the main talent of comedy: it consists in keeping back what is hateful; and mark, in the world that which is hateful abounds. As soon as you will paint the world truly, philosophically, you meet with vice, injustice, and everywhere indignation; amusement flees before anger and morality. Consider the basis of *Tartufe;* an obscene pedant, a red-faced hypocritical wretch, who, palming himself off on an honest and refined family, tries to drive the son away, marry the daughter, corrupt the wife, ruin and imprison the father, and almost succeeds in it, not by clever plots, but by vulgar mummery, and by the coarse audacity of his caddish disposition. What could be more repellent? And how is amusement to be drawn from such a subject, where Beaumarchais and La Bruyère[1] failed? Similarly, in the *Misanthrope*, is not the spectacle of a loyally sincere and honest man, very much in love, whom his virtue finally overwhelms with ridicule and drives from society, a sad sight to see? Rousseau was annoyed that it should produce laughter; and if we were to look upon the subject, not in Molière, but in itself, we should find enough to revolt our natural generosity. Recall his other plots: Georges Dandin mystified, Géronte beaten, Arnolphe duped, Harpagon plundered, Sganarelle married, girls seduced, louts thrashed, simpletons turned financiers. There are sorrows here, and deep ones; many would rather weep than laugh at them. Arnolphe, Dandin, Harpagon, are almost tragic characters; and when we see them in the world instead of the theatre, we are not disposed to sarcasm, but to pity. Picture to yourself the originals from whom Molière has taken his doctors. Consider this venturesome experimentalist, who, in the interest of science, tries a new saw, or inoculates a

[1] *Onuphre*, in La Bruyère's *Caractères*, ch. xiii. *de la Mode; Begears*, in Beaumarchais' *la Mère Coupable*.

virus; think of his long nights at the hospital, the wan patient carried on a mattress to the operating table, and stretching out his leg to the knife; or again of the peasant's bed of straw in the damp cottage, where an old dropsical mother lies choking,[1] while her children grudgingly count up the crowns she has already cost them. You quit such scenes with a swelling heart, charged with sympathy for human misery; you discover that life, seen near and face to face, is a mass of trivial harshnesses and of grievous passions; you are tempted, if you wish to depict it, to enter into the mire of sorrows whereon Balzac and Shakspeare have built: you see in it no other poetry than that audacious reasoning power which from such a confusion abstracts the master-forces, or the light of the genius which flickers over the throes and the falls of so many polluted and murdered wretches. How all changes under the hand of a mercurial Frenchman! how all this human ugliness is blotted out! how amusing is the spectacle which Molière has arranged for us! how we ought to thank the great artist for having transformed his subject so well! At last we have a laughing world, on canvas at least; we could not have it otherwise, but this we have. How pleasant it is to forget truth! what an art is that which divests us of ourselves! what a point of view which converts the contortions of suffering into ridiculous grimaces! Gaiety has come upon us, the dearest of a Frenchman's possessions. The soldiers of Villars used to dance that they might forget they had no longer any bread. Of all French possessions, too, it is the best. This gift does not destroy thought, but it masks it. In Molière, truth is at the bottom, but concealed; he has heard the sobs of human tragedy, but he prefers not to echo them. It is quite enough to feel our wounds; let us not go to the theatre to see them again. Philosophy, while it reveals them, advises us not to think of them too much. Let us enliven our condition with the gaiety of free conversation and light wit, as we would the chamber of sickness. Let us muffle up Tartufe, Harpagon, the doctors, with outrageous ridicule: ridicule will make us forget their vices; they will afford us amusement instead of causing horror. Let Alceste be grumpy and awkward. It is in the first place true, because our more valiant virtues are only the outbreaks of a temper out of harmony with circumstances; but, in addition, it will be amusing. His mishaps will cease to make him the martyr of justice; they will be only the consequences of a cross-grained character. As to the mystifications of husbands, tutors, and fathers, I fancy that we are not to see in them a concerted attack on society or morality. For one evening we are entertaining ourselves, nothing more. The syringes and thrashings, the masquerades and dances, prove that it is a sheer piece of buffoonery. Do not be afraid that philosophy will perish in a pantomime; it is present even in the *Mariage forcé*, even in the *Malade imaginaire*. It is the mark of a Frenchman and a man of the world to

[1] Consultations of Sganarelle in the *Médecin malgré lui*

clothe everything, even that which is serious, in laughter. When he is thinking, he does not always wish to show it. In his most violent moments he is still the master of the house, the polite host; he talks to you of his thoughts or of his suffering. Mirabeau, when in agony, said to one of his friends with a smile, 'Come, you who take an interest in plucky deaths, you shall see mine!' The French talk in this style when they are depicting life; no other nation knows how to philosophise lightly, and die with good taste.

This is the reason why in no other nation comedy, while it continues comic, affords a moral; Molière is the only man who gives us models without getting pedantic, without trenching on the tragic, without growing solemn. This model is the 'honest man,' as the phrase was, Philinte, Ariste, Clitandre, Eraste;[1] there is no other who can at the same time instruct us and amuse. His talent has reflection for its basis, but it is cultivated by the world. His character has honesty for its basis, but it is in harmony with the world. You may imitate him without transgressing either reason or duty; he is neither a coxcomb nor a roisterer. You can imitate him without neglecting your interests or making yourself ridiculous; he is neither an ignoramus nor unmannerly. He has read and understands the jargon of Trissotin and M. Lycidas, but in order to pierce them through and through, to beat them with their own arguments, to set the gallery in a roar at their expense. He will discuss even morality and religion, but in a style so natural, with proofs so clear, with warmth so genuine, that he interests women, and is listened to by men of the world. He knows man, and reasons upon him, but in such brief sentences, such living delineations, such pungent humour, that his philosophy is the best of entertainments. He is faithful to his ruined mistress, his calumniated friend, but gracefully, without fuss. All his actions, even noble ones, have an easy way about them which adorns them; he does nothing without diversion. His great talent is knowledge of the world; he wears it not only in the trivial circumstances of every-day life, but in the most moving scenes, the most embarrassing positions. A noble swordsman wants to take this 'honest man' as his second in a duel; he reflects a moment, excuses himself in a score of phrases, and 'without playing the Hector,' leaves the bystanders convinced that he is no coward. Armande insults him, then throws herself in his arms; he politely averts the storm, declines the offer with the most loyal frankness, and without employing a single falsehood, leaves the spectators convinced that he is no boor. When he loves Eliante,[2] who prefers Alceste, and whom Alceste may possibly marry, he proposes to her with a complete delicacy and dignity, without lowering himself, without recrimination, without wronging himself or his friend. When Oronte

[1] Amongst women, Éliante, Henriette, Élise, Uranie, Elmire.

[2] Compare the admirable tact and coolness of Éliante, Henriette, and Elmire.

reads him a sonnet, he does not assume in the fop a nature which he has not, but praises the conventional verses in conventional language, and is not so clumsy as to display a poetical judgment which would be out of place. He takes at once his tone from the circumstances; he perceives instantly what he must speak and what be silent about, in what degree and to what shade, what exact expedient will reconcile truth and conventional propriety, how far he ought to go or where to take his stand, what faint line separates decorum from flattery, truth from awkwardness. On this narrow path he proceeds free from embarrassment or mistakes, never put out of his way by the shocks or changes of circumstance, never allowing the calm smile of politeness to quit his lips, never omitting to receive with a laugh of good humour the nonsense of his neighbour. This cleverness, entirely French, reconciles in him fundamental honesty and worldly breeding; without it, he would be altogether on the one side or the other. In this way comedy finds its hero half-way between the *roué* and the preacher.

Such a theatre depicts a race and an age. This mixture of solidity and elegance belongs to the seventeenth century, and belongs to France. The world does not deprave, it develops Frenchmen; it polished then not only their manners and their homes, but also their sentiments and ideas. Conversation provoked thought; it was no mere talk, but an inquiry; with the exchange of news, it called forth the interchange of reflections. Theology entered into it, as did also philosophy; morals, and the observation of the heart, formed its daily pabulum. Science kept up the sap, and lost only the thorns. Diversion cloaked reason, but did not smother it. Frenchmen never think better than in society; the play of features excites them; their ready ideas flash into lightning, in their shock with the ideas of others. The varied movements of conversation suit their fits and starts; the frequent change of subject fosters their invention; the pungency of piquant speeches reduces truth to small but precious coin, suitable to the lightness of their hands. And the heart is no more tainted by it than the intelligence. The Frenchman is of a sober temperament, with little taste for the brutishness of the drunkard, for violent joviality, for the riot of loose suppers; he is moreover gentle, obliging, always ready to please; to set him at ease, he needs that flow of goodwill and elegance which the world supplies and cherishes. And in accordance therewith, he shapes his temperate and amiable inclinations into maxims; it is a point of honour with him to be serviceable and refined. Such is the honest man, the product of society in a sociable race. It was not so with the people in England. Their ideas do not spring up in chance conversation, but by the concentration of solitary thought; this is the reason why ideas were then wanting. Honesty is not the fruit of sociable instincts, but of personal reflection; that is why honesty was then at a discount. The brutish foundation remained; the outside alone was smooth. Manners were gentle, sentiments harsh; speech was studied, ideas frivolous. Thought

and refinement of soul were rare, talent and fluent wit abundant. There was politeness of manner, not of heart; they had only the set rules and the conventionalisms of life, its giddiness and heedlessness.

VII.

The English comedy writers paint these vices, and possess them. Their talent and their stage are tainted by them. Art and philosophy are absent. The authors do not advance upon a general idea, and they do not proceed by the most direct method. They put together ill, and are embarrassed by materials. Their pieces have generally two intermingled plots, manifestly distinct,[1] combined in order to multiply incidents, and because the public demands a multitude of characters and facts. A strong current of boisterous action is necessary to stir up their dense appreciation; they do as the Romans did, who packed several Greek plays into one. They grew tired of the French simplicity of action, because they had not the French taste and quick apprehension. The two series of actions mingle and jostle one with another. We cannot see where we are going; every moment we are turned out of our path. The scenes are ill connected; they change twenty times from place to place. When one subject begins to develop itself, a deluge of incidents interrupts. An irrelevant dialogue drags on between the incidents, suggesting a book with the notes introduced promiscuously into the text. There is no plan carefully conceived and rigorously carried out; they took, as it were, a plan, and wrote out the scenes one after another, pretty much as they came into their head. Probability is not well cared for. There are poorly arranged disguises, ill simulated folly, mock marriages, and attacks by robbers worthy of the comic opera. To obtain a sequence of ideas and probability, one must set out from some general idea. The conception of avarice, hypocrisy, the education of women, disproportionate marriages, arranges and binds together by its individual power the incidents which are to reveal it. Here we look in vain for such a conception. Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, are only men of wit, not thinkers. They slip over the surface of things, but do not penetrate. They play with their characters. They aim at success, at amusement. They sketch caricatures, they spin out in lively fashion a vain and railing conversation; they make answers clash with one another, fling forth paradoxes; their nimble fingers manipulate and juggle with the incidents in a hundred ingenious and unlooked-for ways. They have animation, they abound in gesture and repartee; the constant bustle of the stage and its lively spirit surround them with continual excitement. But the pleasure is only skin-deep; you have seen nothing of the eternal foundation and the real nature of mankind; you carry no thought away; you have

[1] Dryden boasts of this. With him we always find a complete comedy grossly amalgamated with a complete tragedy.

passed an hour, and that is all; the amusement leaves you vacant, and serves only to fill up the evenings of coquettes and coxcombs.

Moreover, this pleasure is not real; it has no resemblance to the hearty laughter of Molière. In English comedy there is always an undercurrent of tartness. We have seen this, and more, in Wycherley; the others, though less cruel, joke sourly. Their characters in a joke say harsh things to one another; they amuse themselves by hurting each other; a Frenchman is pained to hear this interchange of mock politeness; he does not go to blows by way of fun. Their dialogue turns naturally to virulent satire; instead of covering vice, it makes it prominent; instead of making it ridiculous, it makes it odious:

'*Clarissa.* Prithee, tell me how you have passed the night? . . .

Araminta. Why, I have been studying all the ways my brain could produce to plague my husband.

Cl. No wonder indeed you look as fresh this morning, after the satisfaction of such pleasing ideas all night.'[1]

These women are veritably wicked, and that too openly. Throughout the vice is crude, pushed to extremes, served up with material adjuncts. Lady Fidget says: 'Our virtue is like the statesman's religion, the quaker's word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour; but to cheat those that trust us.'[2] Or again: 'If you'll consult the widows of this town,' says a young lady who will not marry again, 'they'll tell you, you should never take a lease of a house you can hire for a quarter's warning.'[3] Or again: 'My heart cut a caper up to my mouth,' says a young heir, 'when I heard my father was shot through the head.'[4] The gentlemen collar each other on the stage, treat the ladies roughly before spectators, contrive an adultery not far off between the wings. Base or ferocious parts abound. There are furies like Mrs. Loveit and Lady Touchwood. There are swine like parson Bull and the go-between Coupler. Lady Touchwood wants to stab her lover on the stage.[5] Coupler, on the stage, uses gestures which recall the court of Henry III. of France. Wretches like Fainall and Maskwell are unmitigated scoundrels, and their hatefulness is not even cloaked by the grotesque. Even honest women like Silvia and Mrs. Sullen are plunged into the most shocking situations. Nothing shocked that public; they had no real education, but only its varnish.

There is a forced connection between the mind of a writer, the world which surrounds him, and the characters which he produces; for it is from this world that he draws the materials out of which he composes them. The sentiments which he contemplates in others and feels

[1] Vanbrugh, *Confederacy*, ii. 1. [2] Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, v. 4.

[3] Vanbrugh, *Relapse*, ii. end. [4] *Ibid.*

[5] She says to Maskwell, her lover: 'You want but leisure to invent fresh falsehood, and soothe me to a fond belief of all your fictions; but I will stab the lie that's forming in your heart, and save a sin, in pity to your soul.'—Congreve, *Double Dealer*, v. 17.

himself are gradually arranged into characters; he can only invent after his given model and his acquired experience; and his characters only manifest what he is, or abridge what he has seen. Two features are prominent in this world; they are prominent also on this stage. All the successful characters can be reduced to two classes—natural beings on the one part, and artificial on the other; the first with the coarseness and shamelessness of their primitive inclinations, the second with the frivolities and vices of worldly habits: the first uncultivated, their simplicity revealing nothing but their innate baseness; the second cultivated, their refinement instilling into them nothing but a new corruption. And the talent of the writers is suited to the painting of these two groups: they have the grand English faculty, which is the knowledge of exact detail and real sentiments; they see gestures, surroundings, dresses; they hear the sounds of voices, and they have the courage to exhibit them; they have inherited, very little, and at a great distance, and in spite of themselves, still they have inherited from Shakspeare; they manipulate openly, and without any softening, the coarse harsh red colour which alone can bring out the figures of their brutes. On the other hand, they have animation and a good style; they can express the thoughtless chatter, the foolish affectations, the inexhaustible and capricious abundance of drawing-room stupidities; they have as much liveliness as the most foolish, and at the same time they speak as well as the best instructed; they can give the model of witty conversations; they have lightness of touch, brilliancy, and also facility, exactness, without which you cannot draw the portrait of a man of the world. They find naturally on their palette the strong colours which suit their barbarians, and the pretty tints which suit their exquisites.

VIII.

First there is the blockhead, Squire Sullen, a low kind of sot, of whom his wife speaks in this fashion: 'After his man and he had rolled about the room, like sick passengers in a storm, he comes flounce into bed, dead as a salmon into a fishmonger's basket; his feet cold as ice, his breath hot as a furnace, and his hands and his face as greasy as his flannel nightcap. O matrimony! He tosses up the clothes with a barbarous swing over his shoulders, disorders the whole economy of my bed, leaves me half naked, and my whole night's comfort is the tuneable serenade of that wakeful nightingale, his nose!'[1] Sir John Brute says: 'What the plague did I marry her (his wife) for? I knew she did not like me; if she had, she would have lain with me.'[2] He turns his drawing-room into a stable, smokes it foul to drive the women away, throws his pipe at their heads, drinks, swears, and curses. Coarse words and oaths flow through his conversation like filth through a

[1] Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem*, ii. 1.
[2] Vanbrugh, *Provoked Wife*, v 6.

gutter. He drinks himself drunk at the tavern, and howls out, 'Damn morality! and damn the watch! and let the constable be married.'[1] He cries out that he is a free-born Englishman; he wants to go out and break everything. He leaves the inn with other besotted scamps, and attacks the women in the street. He robs a tailor who was carrying a doctor's gown, puts it on, thrashes the guard. He is seized and taken by the constable; on the road he breaks out into abuse, and ends by proposing to him, amid the hiccups and stupid reiterations of a drunken man, to go and find out somewhere a bottle and a girl. He returns at last, covered with blood and mud, growling like a dog, with red swollen eyes, calling his wife a slut and a liar. He goes to her, forcibly embraces her, and as she turns away, cries, 'I see it goes damnably against your stomach—and therefore—kiss me again. (Kisses and tumbles her.) So, now you being as dirty and as nasty as myself, we may go pig together.'[2] He wants to get a cup of cold tea out of the closet, kicks open the door, and discovers his wife's and niece's gallants. He storms, raves madly with his clammy tongue, then suddenly falls asleep. His valet comes and takes the insensible burden on his shoulders.[3] It is the portrait of a mere animal, and I fancy it is not a nice one.

That is the husband; let us look at the father, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, a country gentleman, elegant, if any of them were. Tom Fashion knocks at the door of the mansion, which looks like 'Noah's ark,' and where they receive people as in a besieged city. A servant appears at a window with a blunderbuss in his hand, who is at last unwillingly persuaded that he ought to let his master know. 'Ralph, go thy weas, and ask Sir Tunbelly if he pleases to be waited upon. And dost hear? call to nurse, that she may lock up Miss Hoyden before the geat's open.'[4] You see in this house they keep a watch over the girls. Sir Tunbelly comes up with his people, armed with guns, pitchforks, scythes, and clubs, in no amiable mood, and wants to know the name of his visitor. 'Till I know your name, I shall not ask you to come into my house; and when I know your name—'tis six to four I don't ask you neither.'[5] He is like a watchdog growling and looking at the calves of an intruder. But he presently learns that this intruder is his future son-in-law; he utters some exclamations, and makes his excuses. 'Cod's my life! I ask your lordship's pardon ten thousand times. (*To a servant.*) Here, run in a-doors quickly. Get a Scotch-coal fire in the great parlour; set all the Turkey-work chairs in their places; get the great brass candlesticks out, and be sure stick the sockets full of laurel. Run! . . . And do you hear, run away to nurse, bid her let Miss Hoyden loose

[1] Vanbrugh, *Provoked Wife*, iii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* v. 2.

[3] The valet Rasor says to his master: 'Come to your kennel, you cuckoldy drunken sot you.'—*Ibid.*

[4] Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, iii. 3. [5] *Ibid.*

again, and if it was not shifting-day, let her put on a clean tucker, quick!'[1] The false son-in-law wants to marry Hoyden straight off. 'Not so soon neither! that's shooting my girl before you bid her stand . . . Besides, my wench's wedding-gown is not come home yet.'[2] The other suggests that a speedy marriage will save money. Spare money? says the father, 'Udswoons, I'll give my wench a wedding-dinner, though I go to grass with the king of Assyria for't. . . . Ah! poor girl, she'll be scared out of her wits on her wedding-night; for, honestly speaking, she does not know a man from a woman but by his beard and his breeches.'[3] Foppington, the true son-in-law, arrives. Sir Tunbelly, taking him for an impostor, calls him a dog; Hoyden proposes to drag him in the horse-pond; they bind him hand and foot, and thrust him into the dog-kennel; Sir Tunbelly puts his fist under his nose, and threatens to knock his teeth down his throat. Afterwards, having discovered the impostor, he says, 'My lord, will you cut his throat? or shall I? . . . Here, give me my dog-whip. . . . Here, here, here, let me beat out his brains, and that will decide all.'[4] He behaves like a lunatic, and wants to fall upon him with his fists. Such is the country gentleman, landlord and farmer, boxer and drinker, brawler and beast. There steams up from all these scenes a smell of cooking, the noise of riot, the odour of a dunghill.

Like father like child. What a candid creature is Miss Hoyden! She grumbles to herself, 'It's well I have a husband a-coming, or, ecod, I'd marry the baker; I would so! Nobody can knock at the gate, but presently I must be locked up; and here's the young greyhound bitch can run loose about the house all the day long, she can; 'tis very well.'[5] When the nurse tells her her future husband has arrived, she leaps for joy, and kisses the old woman. 'O Lord! I'll go put on my laced smock, though I'm whipped till the blood run down my heels for't.'[6] Tom comes himself, and asks her if she will be his wife. 'Sir, I never disobey my father in anything but eating of green gooseberries.' But your father wants to wait . . . 'a whole week.' 'A week!—why, I shall be an old woman by that time.'[7] I cannot give all her answers. There is the spirit of a she-goat under her kitchen-talk. She marries Tom secretly on the spot, and the chaplain wishes them many children. 'Ecod,' she says, 'with all my heart! the more the merrier, I say; ha! nurse!'[8]

[1] Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, iii. 3. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 5. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* v. 5.
[5] *Ibid.* iii. 4. [6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid.* iv. 1.

[8] *Ibid.* iv. 4. The character of the nurse is excellent. Tom Fashion thanks her for the training she has given Hoyden: 'Alas, all I can boast of is, I gave her pure good milk, and so your honour would have said, an you had seen how the poor thing sucked it.—Eh! God's blessing on the sweet face on't! how it used to hang at this poor teat, and suck and squeeze, and kick and sprawl it would, till the belly on't was so full, it would drop off like a leech.'

This is genuine, even after Juliet's nurse in Shakspeare.

But Lord Foppington, the true intended, turns up, and Tom makes off. Instantly her plan is formed. She bids the nurse and chaplain hold their tongues. 'If you two will be sure to hold your tongues, and not say a word of what's past, I'll e'en marry this lord too.' 'What,' says nurse, 'two husbands, my dear?' 'Why, you had three, good nurse, you may hold your tongue.'[1] She nevertheless takes a dislike to the lord, and very soon; he is not well made, he hardly gives her enough pocket-money; she hesitates between the two. 'If I leave my lord, I must leave my lady too; and when I rattle about the streets in my coach, they'll only say, There goes mistress—mistress—mistress what? What's this man's name I have married, nurse?' 'Squire Fashion. 'Squire Fashion is it?—Well, 'Squire, that's better than nothing.[2] . . . Love him! why do you think I love him, nurse? ecod, I would not care if he were hanged, so I were but once married to him!—No—that which pleases me, is to think what work I'll make when I get to London; for when I am a wife and a lady both, nurse, ecod, I'll flaunt it with the best of 'em.'[3] But she is cautious all the same. She knows that her father has his dog's whip handy, and that he will give her a good shake. 'But, d'ye hear?' she says to the nurse. 'Pray, take care of one thing: when the business comes to break out, be sure you get between me and my father, for you know his tricks; he'll knock me down.'[4] Here is your true moral ascendency. For such a character, there is no other, and Sir Tunbelly does well to keep her tied up, and to let her taste a discipline of daily stripes.[5]

IX.

Let us accompany this modest character to town, and place her with her equals in fine society. All these candid folk do wonders there, both in the way of actions and maxims. Wycherley's *Country Wife* gives us the tone. When one of them happens to find herself half honest,[6] she has the manners and the boldness of a hussar. Others seem born with the souls of courtesans and procuresses. 'If I marry my lord Aimwell,' says Dorinda, 'there will be title, place, and precedence, the Park, the play, and the drawing-room, splendour, equipage, noise, and flambeaux.—Hey, my lady Aimwell's servants there! Lights, lights to the stairs! my lady Aimwell's coach put forward! Stand by, make room for her ladyship!—Are not these things moving?'[7] She is open, and so are others—Corinna, Miss Betty, Belinda, for example. Belinda says to her aunt, whose virtue is tottering: 'The sooner you capitulate the better.'[8] Further on, when she has decided to marry

[1] Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, iv. 6. [2] *Ibid.* v. 5. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 1. [4] *Ibid.* v. 5.

[5] See also the character of a young stupid blockhead, Squire Humphrey (Vanbrugh's *Journey to London*.) He has only a single idea, to be always eating

[6] Wycherley's Hippolita; Farquhar's Silvia.

[7] Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem*, iv. 1. [8] Vanbrugh's *Provoked Wife*, iii. 3

Heartfree, to save her aunt who is compromised, she makes a confession of faith which promises well for the future of her new spouse: 'Were't not for your affair in the balance, I should go near to pick up some odious man of quality yet, and only take poor Heartfree for a gallant.'[1] These young ladies are clever, and in all cases apt to follow good instruction. Hear Miss Prue: 'Look you here, madam, then, what Mr. Tattle has given me.—Look you here, cousin, here's a snuff-box; nay, there's snuff in't;—here, will you have any?—Oh, good! how sweet it is!—Mr. Tattle is all over sweet; his peruke is sweet, and his gloves are sweet, and his handkerchief is sweet, pure sweet, sweeter than roses.—Smell him, mother, madam, I mean.—He gave me this ring for a kiss. . . . Smell, cousin; he says, he'll give me something that will make my smocks smell this way. Is not it pure?—It's better than lavender, mun.—I'm resolved I won't let nurse put any more lavender among my smocks—ha, cousin?'[2] It is the silly chatter of a young magpie, who flies for the first time. Tattle, alone with her, tells her he is going to make love:

'*Miss P.* Well; and how will you make love to me? come, I long to have you begin. Must I make love too? you must tell me how.

T. You must let me speak, miss, you must not speak first; I must ask you questions, and you must answer.

Miss P. What, is it like the catechism?—come then, ask me.

T. D'ye think you can love me?

Miss P. Yes.

T. Pooh! pox! you must not say yes already; I shan't care a farthing for you then in a twinkling.

Miss P. What must I say then?

T. Why, you must say no, or you believe not, or you can't tell.

Miss P. Why, must I tell a lie then?

T. Yes, if you'd be well-bred;—all well-bred persons lie.—Besides, you are a woman, you must never speak what you think: your words must contradict your thoughts; but your actions may contradict your words. So, when I ask you, if you can love me, you must say no, but you must love me too. If I tell you you are handsome, you must deny it, and say I flatter you. But you must think yourself more charming than I speak you: and like me, for the beauty which I say you have, as much as if I had it myself. If I ask you to kiss me, you must be angry, but you must not refuse me. . . .

Miss P. O Lord, I swear this is pure!—I like it better than our old-fashioned country way of speaking one's mind;—and must not you lie too?

T. Hum!—Yes; but you must believe I speak truth.

Miss P. O Gemini! well, I always had a great mind to tell lies; but they frighted me, and said it was a sin.

T. Well, my pretty creature; will you make me happy by giving me a kiss?

Miss P. No, indeed; I'm angry at you. (*Runs and kisses him.*)

T. Hold, hold, that's pretty well;—but you should not have given it me, but have suffered me to have taken it.

[1] Vanbrugh's *Provoked Wife* v. 2. [2] Congreve's *Love for Love*, ii. 10.

Miss P. Well, we'll do it again.

T. With all my heart. Now, then, my little angel. (*Kisses her.*)

Miss P. Pish!

T. That's right—again, my charmer! (*Kisses again.*)

Miss P. O fy! nay, now I can't abide you.

T. Admirable! that was as well as if you had been born and bred in Covent-Garden.'[1]

She makes such rapid progress, that we must stop the quotation forthwith. And mark, what is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh. All these charming characters soon employ the language of kitchen-maids. When Ben, the dolt of a sailor, wants to make love to Miss Prue, she sends him off with a flea in his ear, raves, lets loose a string of cries and coarse expressions, calls him a 'great sea-calf.' 'What does father mean,' he says, 'to leave me alone, as soon as I come home, with such a dirty dowdy? Sea-calf! I an't calf enough to lick your chalked face, you cheese-curd, you.' Moved by these amenities, she breaks out into a rage, weeps, calls him 'a stinking tar-barrel.'[2] They come and put a stop to this first essay at gallantry. She fires up declares she will marry Tattle, or else Robin the butler. Her father says, 'Hussy, you shall have a rod.' She answers, 'A fiddle of a rod! I'll have a husband: and if you won't get me one, I'll get one for myself. I'll marry our Robin the butler.'[3] Here are pretty and prancing mares if you like; but decidedly, in these authors' hands, the natural man becomes nothing but a waif from the stable or the kennel.

Will you be better pleased by the educated man? The worldly life which they depict is a regular carnival, and the heads of their heroines are full of wild imaginations and unchecked gossip. You may see in Congreve how they chatter, with what a flow of words and affectations, with what a shrill and modulated voice, with what gestures, what twisting of arms and neck, what looks raised to heaven, what genteel airs, what grimaces. Lady Wishfort speaks:

'But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come? or will he not fail when he does come? Will he be importunate, Foible, and push? For if he should not be importunate, I shall never break decorums:—I shall die with confusion, if I am forced to advance.—Oh no, I can never advance!—I shall swoon, if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy neither—I won't give him despair—but a little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring.' *Foible.* 'A little scorn becomes your ladyship.' *Lady W.* 'Yes, but tenderness becomes me best—a sort of dyingness—you see that picture has a sort of a—ha, Foible! a swimmingness in the eye—yes, I'll look so—my niece affects it; but she wants features. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Let my toilet be removed—I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know I'll be surprised, I'll be taken by surprise.[4] . . . And how do I look, Foible?

[1] Congreve's *Love for Love*, ii. 11. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 7. [3] *Ibid.* v. 6.

[4] Congreve, *The Way of the World*, iii. 5.

F. 'Most killing well, madam.' *Lady W.* 'Well, and how shall I receive him? in what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? . . . Shall I sit?—no, I won't sit—I'll walk—ay, I'll walk from the door upon his entrance; and then turn full upon him—no, that will be too sudden. I'll lie—ay, I'll lie down—I'll receive him in my little dressing-room; there's a couch—yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow: with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way—yes—and then as soon as he appears, start, ay, start, and be surprised, and rise to meet him in a pretty disorder.'[1]

These hesitations of a finished coquette become still more vehement at the critical moment. Lady Plyant thinks herself beloved by Mellefont, who does not love her at all, and tries in vain to undeceive her.

Mel. 'For Heaven's sake, madam.' *Lady P.* 'O, name it no more!—Bless me, how can you talk of heaven! and have so much wickedness in your heart! May be you don't think it a sin.—They say some of you gentlemen don't think it a sin.—May be it is no sin to them that don't think it so; indeed, if I did not think it a sin—but still my honour, if it were no sin.—But then, to marry my daughter, for the conveniency of frequent opportunities, I'll never consent to that; as sure as can be, I'll break the match.' *Mel.* 'Death and amazement.—Madam, upon my knees.' *Lady P.* 'Nay, nay, rise up; come, you shall see my good nature. I know love is powerful, and nobody can help his passion: 'tis not your fault; nor I swear it is not mine. How can I help it, if I have charms? and how can you help it if you are made a captive? I swear it is pity it should be a fault. But my honour,—well, but your honour too—but the sin!—well, but the necessity—O Lord, here is somebody coming, I dare not stay. Well, you must consider of your crime; and strive as much as can be against it,—strive, be sure—but don't be melancholic, don't despair.—But never think that I'll grant you anything; O Lord, no.—But be sure you lay aside all thoughts of the marriage: for though I know you don't love Cynthia, only as a blind to your passion for me, yet it will make me jealous.—O Lord, what did I say? jealous! no, no; I can't be jealous, for I must not love you—therefore don't hope,—but don't despair neither.—O, they're coming! I must fly.'[2]

She escapes, and we will not follow her.

This giddiness, this volubility, this pretty corruption, these reckless and affected airs, are collected in the most brilliant, the most worldly portrait of the stage we are discussing, that of Mrs. Millamant, 'a fine lady,' as the Dramatis Personæ say.[3] She enters, 'with her fan spread and her streamers out,' dragging a train of furbelows and ribbons, passing through the crowd of laced and bedizened fops, in splendid perukes, who flutter about her path, haughty and wanton, witty and scornful, toying with gallantries, petulant, with a horror of every grave word and sustained action, falling in only with change and pleasure. She laughs at the sermons of Mirabell, her suitor:

[1] Congreve, *The Way of the World*, ii.

[2] Congreve, *The Double-dealer*, ii. 5.

[3] Congreve, *The Way of the World*.

'Sententious Mirabell!—Prithee don't look with that violent and inflexible wise face, like Solomon at the dividing of the child in an old tapestry-hanging.[1] . . . Ha! ha! ha!—pardon me, dear creature, though I grant you 'tis a little barbarous, ha! ha! ha!'[2]

She breaks out into laughter, then gets into a rage, then banters, then sings, then makes faces. Her attractions change at every motion while you look at her. It is a regular whirlpool; all turns round in her brain as in a clock when the mainspring is broken. Nothing can be prettier than her fashion of entering on matrimony:

Mill. 'Ah! I'll never marry unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure! . . . My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? my faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Ay—h—adieu—my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *sommeils du matin*, adieu?—I can't do it; 'tis more than impossible—positively, Mirabell, I'll lie a-bed in a morning as long as I please.' *Mir.* 'Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.' *Mill.* 'Ah! idle creature, get up when you will—and d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.' *Mir.* 'Names!' *Mill.* 'Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweet heart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that—good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler, and Sir Francis. . . . Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together; but let us be very strange and well-bred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while; and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.' . . . *Mir.* 'Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract?'[3] *Mill.* 'Fainall, what shall I do? shall I have him? I think I must have him.' *Fain.* 'Ay, ay, take him. What should you do?' *Mill.* 'Well then—I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright—Fainall, I shall never say it—well—I think—I'll endure you.' *Fain.* 'Fy! fy! have him, have him, and tell him so in plain terms: for I am sure you have a mind to him.' *Mill.* 'Are you? I think I have—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too—well, you ridiculous thing you, I'll have you—I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked—here kiss my hand though.—So, hold your tongue now, don't say a word.'[4]

The agreement is complete. I should like to see one more article to it—a divorce '*a mensâ et thoro*:' this would be the genuine marriage of the worldlings, that is, a decent divorce. And I answer for it; in two years, Mirabell and Millamant will come to this. Hither tends the whole of this theatre; for, with regard to the women, but particularly with regard to the married women, I have only presented their most amiable aspects. Deeper down it is all gloomy, bitter, above all, pernicious. It represents a household as a prison, marriage as a warfare, woman as a rebel, adultery as the result looked for, disorder as the right condition, extravagance as pleasure.[5] A woman of fashion goes

[1] Congreve's *Way of the World*, ii. 6.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 11.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 5.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 6.
[5] *Amanda.* 'How did you live together?' *Berinthia.* 'Like man and wife, asunder.—He loved the country, I the town. He hawks and hounds, I coaches and equipage. He eating and drinking, I carding and playing. He the sound of a

to bed in the morning, rises at mid-day, curses her husband, listens to obscenities, frequents balls, haunts the plays, ruins reputations, turns her home into a gambling-house, borrows money, allures men, associates her honour and fortune with debts and assignations. 'We are as wicked (as men),' says Lady Bute, 'but our vices lie another way. Men have more courage than we, so they commit more bold, impudent sins. They quarrel, fight, swear, drink, blaspheme, and the like; whereas we being cowards, only backbite, tell lies, cheat at cards, and so forth.'[1] Excellent catalogue, where the gentlemen are included with the rest! The world has done nothing but arm them with correct phrases and elegant dresses. In Congreve especially they have the best style; above all, they know how to hand ladies about and entertain them with news; they are expert in the fence of retorts and replies; they are never out of countenance, find means to make the most ticklish notions understood; they discuss very well, speak excellently, salute still better; but to sum up, they are blackguards, epicureans on system, professed seducers. They set forth immorality in maxims, and reason out their vice. 'Give me,' says one, 'a man that keeps his five senses keen and bright as his sword, that has 'em always drawn out in their just order and strength, with his reason, as commander at the head of 'em, that detaches 'em by turns upon whatever party of pleasure agreeably offers, and commands 'em to retreat upon the least appearance of disadvantage or danger. . . . I love a fine house, but let another keep it; and just so I love a fine woman.'[2] One deliberately seduces his friend's wife; another under a false name gets possession of his brother's intended A third hires false witnesses to secure a dowry. I must ask the reader to consult for himself the fine stratagems of Worthy, Mirabell, and

horn, I the squeak of a fiddle. We were dull company at table, worse a-bed. Whenever we met, we gave one another the spleen; and never agreed but once, which was about lying alone.'—Vanbrugh, *Relapse*, Act ii. *ad fin.*

Compare Vanbrugh, *A Journey to London.* Rarely has the repulsiveness and corruption of the brutish or worldly nature been more vividly displayed. Little Betty and her brother, Squire Humphry, deserve hanging.

Again. *Mrs. Foresight.* 'Do you think any woman honest?' *Scandal.* 'Yes, several very honest; they'll cheat a little at cards, sometimes; but that's nothing.' *Mrs. F.* 'Pshaw! but virtuous, I mean.' *S.* 'Yes, faith; I believe some women are virtuous too; but 'tis as I believe some men are valiant, through fear. For why should a man court danger or a woman shun pleasure?'—Congreve, *Love for Love*, iii. 14.

[1] Vanbrugh. *Provoked Wife*. v. 2. Compare also in this piece the character of Mademoiselle, the French chambermaid. They represent French vice as even more shameless than English vice.

[2] Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*, i. 1; and in the same piece here is the catechism of love: 'What are the objects of that passion?—youth, beauty, and clean linen.' And from the *Mock Astrologer* of Dryden: 'As I am a gentleman a man about town, one that wears good cloths, eats, drinks, and wenches suffi ciently.'

others. They are coldblooded rascals who commit treachery, adultery, scoundrelism, like trained experts. They are represented here as men of fashion; they are young leaders, heroes, and as such they manage to get hold of an heiress. We must go to Mirabell for an example of this medley of corruption and elegance. Mrs. Fainall, his old mistress, married by him to a common friend, a miserable wretch, complains to him of this hateful marriage. He appeases her, gives her advice, shows her the precise mode, the true expedient for setting things on a comfortable footing. 'You should have just so much disgust for your husband, as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover.' She cries in despair, 'Why did you make me marry this man?' He smiles calmly, 'Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? to save that idol, reputation.' How tender is this argument! How can a man better console a woman whom he has plunged into bitter unhappiness! What a touching logic in the insinuation which follows: 'If the familiarities of our loves had produced that consequence of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father's name with credit, but on a husband?' He insists on his reason in an excellent style; listen to the distinction of a man of feeling: 'A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose. When you are weary of him, you know your remedy.'[1] Thus are a woman's feelings to be considered, especially a woman whom we have loved. To cap all, this delicate conversation is meant to force the poor deserted Mrs. Fainall into an intrigue which shall obtain for Mirabell a pretty wife and a good dowry. Certainly this gentleman knows the world; no one could better employ a former mistress. Such are the cultivated characters of this theatre, as dishonest as the uncultivated ones: having transformed their evil instincts into systematic vices, lust into debauchery, brutality into cynicism, perversity into depravity, deliberate egotists, calculating sensualists, with rules for their immorality, reducing feeling to self-interest, honour to decorum, happiness to pleasure.

The English Restoration altogether was one of those great crises which, while warping the development of a society and a literature, show the inward spirit which they modify, but which contradicts them. Society did not lack vigour, nor literature talent; men of the world were polished, writers inventive. There was a court, drawing-rooms, conversation, worldly life, a taste for letters, the example of France, peace, leisure, the influence of the sciences, politics, theology,—in short, all the happy circumstances which can elevate the intellect and civilise manners. There was the vigorous satire of Wycherley, the sparkling dialogue and fine raillery of Congreve, the frank nature and animation of Vanbrugh, the manifold inventions of Farquhar, in brief, all the resources which might nourish the comic element, and add a genuine

[1] Congreve, *The Way of the World*, ii. 4.

theatre to the best constructions of human intelligence. Nothing came to a head; all was abortive. The age has left nothing but the memory of corruption; their comedy remains a repertory of viciousness; society had only a soiled elegance, literature a frigid wit. Their manners were gross and trivial; their ideas are futile or incomplete. Through disgust and reaction, a revolution was at hand in literary feeling and moral habits, as well as in general beliefs and political institutions. Man was to change altogether, and at a single turn. The same repugnance and the same experience was to detach him from every aspect of his old condition. The Englishman discovered that he was not monarchical, Papistical, nor sceptical, but liberal, Protestant, and devout. He came to understand that he was not a roisterer nor a worldling, but reflective and introspective. He contains a current of animal life too violent to suffer him without danger to abandon himself to enjoyment; he needs a barrier of moral reasoning to repress his outbreaks. He contains a current of attention and will too strong to suffer himself to rest content with trifles; he needs some weighty and serviceable labour on which to expend his power. He needs a barrier and an employment. He needs a constitution and a religion which shall restrain him by duties which must be performed, and rights which must be defended. He is content only in a serious and orderly life; there he finds the natural groove and the necessary outlet of his passions and his faculties. From this time he enters upon it, and this theatre itself exhibits the token. It remakes and transforms itself. Collier threw discredit upon it; Addison condemned it. National sentiment awoke from the dream; French manners are jeered at; the prologues celebrate the defeats of Louis XIV.; the licence, elegance, religion of his court, are presented under a ridiculous or odious light.[1] Immorality gradually diminishes, marriage is more respected, the heroines go no further than to the verge of adultery;[2] the roisterers are pulled up at the critical moment; one of them suddenly declares himself purified, and speaks in verse, the better to mark his enthusiasm; another praises marriage;[3] some aspire in the fifth act to an orderly life. We shall soon see Steele writing a moral treatise called *The Christian Hero*. Henceforth comedy declines, and literary talent flows into another channel. Essay, romance, pamphlet, dissertation, displace the drama; and the English classical spirit, abandoning the kinds of writing which are foreign to its nature, enters

[1] The part of Chaplain Foigard in Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem;* of Mademoiselle, and generally of all the French people.

[2] The part of Amanda in Vanbrugh's *Relapse;* of Mrs. Sullen; the conversion of two roisterers, in the *Beaux Stratagem.*

[3] 'Though marriage be a lottery in which there are a wondrous many blanks, yet there is one inestimable lot, in which the only heaven upon earth is written.'

'To be capable of loving one, doubtless, is better than to possess a thousand.'—VANBRUGH.

upon the great works which are destined to immortalise it and give it expression.

X.

Nevertheless, in this continuous decline of dramatic invention, and in the great change of literary vitality, some shoots strike out at distant intervals towards comedy; for mankind always seeks for entertainment, and the theatre is always a place of entertainment. The tree once planted grows, feebly without a doubt, with long intervals of almost total dryness and almost constant barrenness, yet subject to imperfect renewals of life, to passing partial blossomings, sometimes to an inferior fruitage bursting forth from the lowest branches. Even when the great subjects are worn out, there is still room here and there for a happy idea. Let a wit, clever and experienced, take it in hand, he will catch up a few oddities on his way, he will introduce on the scene some vice or fault of his time; the public will come in crowds, and ask no better than to recognise itself and laugh. There was one of these successes when Gay, in the *Beggars' Opera*, brought out the rascaldom of the great world, and avenged the public on Walpole and the court; another, when Goldsmith, inventing a series of mistakes, led his hero and his audience through five acts of blunders.[1] After all, if true comedy can only exist in certain ages, ordinary comedy can exist in any age. It is too near akin to the pamphlet, novels, satire, not to raise itself occasionally by its propinquity. If I have an enemy, instead of attacking him in a brochure, I can take my fling at him on the stage. If I am capable of painting a character in a story, I am not far from having the talent to bring out the pith of this same character in a few turns of a dialogue. If I can quietly ridicule a vice in a copy of verses, I shall easily arrive at making this vice speak out from the mouth of an actor. At least I shall be tempted to try it; I shall be seduced by the wonderful *éclat* which the footlights, declamation, scenery give to an idea; I shall try and bring my own into this strong light; I shall go in for it even when it is necessary that my talent be a little or a good deal forced for the occasion. If need be, I shall delude myself, substitute expedients for fresh originality and true comic genius. If on a few points I am inferior to the great masters, on some, it may be, I surpass them; I can work up my style, refine upon it, discover happier words, more striking jokes, livelier exchange of brilliant repartees, newer images, more picturesque comparisons; I can take from this one a character, from the other a situation, borrow of a neighbouring nation, out of old plays, good novels, biting pamphlets, pointed satires, and small newspapers; I can accumulate effects, serve up to the public a stronger and more appetising stew; above all, I can perfect my machine, oil the wheels, plan the surprises, the stage

[1] *She Stoops to Conquer.*

effects, the see-saw of the plot, like a consummate playwright. The art of constructing plays is as capable of development as the art of clockmaking. The farce-writer of to-day sees that the catastrophe of half of Molière's plays is ridiculous; nay, many of them can produce effects better than Molière; in the long run, they succeed in stripping the theatre of all awkwardness and circumlocution. A piquant style, and perfect machinery; pungency in all the words, and animation in all the scenes; a superabundance of wit, and marvels of ingenuity; over all this, a true physical activity, and the secret pleasure of depicting and justifying oneself, of public self-glorification: here is the foundation of the *School for Scandal*, here the source of the talent and the success of Sheridan.

He was the contemporary of Beaumarchais, and resembled him in his talent and in his life. The two epochs, the two schools of drama, the two characters, correspond. Like Beaumarchais, he was a lucky adventurer, clever, amiable, and generous, reaching success through scandal, who flashed up and shone in a moment, scaled with a rush the empyrean of politics and literature, settled himself, as it were, among the constellations, and, like a brilliant rocket, presently went out in the darkness. Nothing failed him; he attained all at the first leap, without apparent effort, like a prince who need only show himself to win his place. All the most surpassing happiness, the most brilliant in art, the most exalted in worldly position, he took as his birthright. The poor unknown youth, wretched translator of an unreadable Greek sophist, who at twenty walked about Bath in a red waistcoat and a cocked hat, destitute of hope, and ever conscious of the emptiness of his pockets, had gained the heart of the most admired beauty and musician of her time, had carried her off from ten rich, elegant, titled adorers, had fought with the best-hoaxed of the ten, beaten him, had carried by storm the curiosity and attention of the public. Then, challenging glory and wealth, he placed successively on the stage the most diverse and the most applauded dramas, comedies, farce, opera, serious verse; he bought and worked a large theatre without a farthing, inaugurated a reign of successes and pecuniary advantages, and led a life of elegance amid the enjoyments of social and domestic joys, surrounded by universal admiration and wonder. Thence, aspiring yet higher, he conquered power, entered the House of Commons, showed himself a match for the first orators, opposed Pitt, accused Warren Hastings, supported Fox, jeered at Burke; sustained with *éclat*, disinterestedness, and constancy, a most difficult and generous part; became one of the three or four most noted men in England, an equal of the greatest lords, the friend of a royal prince, in the end even Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall, treasurer to the fleet. In every career he took the lead. As Byron said of him:

'Whatsoever Sheridan has done, or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy (*The School for*

Scandal), the best drama (in my mind far before that St. Giles lampoon *The Beggar's Opera*), the best farce (*The Critic*—it is only too good for a farce), and the best Address (*Monologue on Garrick*), and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Begum Speech) ever conceived or heard in this country.'[1]

All ordinary rules were reversed in his favour. He was forty-four years old, debts began to shower down on him; he had supped and drunk to excess; his cheeks were purple, his nose red. In this state he met at the Duke of Devonshire's a charming young lady with whom he fell in love. At the first sight she exclaimed, 'What an ugly man, a regular monster!' He spoke to her; she confessed that he was very ugly, but that he had a good deal of wit. He spoke again, and again, and she found him very amiable. He spoke yet again, and she loved him, and resolved at all hazard to marry him. The father, a prudent man, wishing to end the affair, gave out that his future son-in-law must provide a dowry of fifteen thousand pounds; the fifteen thousand pounds were deposited as by magic in the hands of a banker; the young couple set off into the country; and Sheridan, meeting his son, a fine strapping son, ill-disposed to the marriage, persuaded him that it was the most reasonable thing a father could do, and the most fortunate event that a son could rejoice over. Whatever the business, whoever the man, he persuaded; none withstood him, every one fell under his charm. What is more difficult than for an ugly man to make a young girl forget his ugliness?

There is one thing more difficult, and that is to make a creditor forget you owe him money. There is something more difficult still, and that is, to borrow money of a creditor who has come to demand it. One day one of his friends was arrested for debt; Sheridan sends for Mr. Henderson, the crabbed tradesman, coaxes him, interests him, moves him to tears, lifts him out of himself, hedges him in with general considerations and lofty eloquence, so that Mr. Henderson offers his purse, actually wants to lend two hundred pounds, insists, and finally, to his great joy, obtains permission to lend it. No one was ever more amiable, quicker to win confidence than Sheridan; rarely has the sympathetic, affectionate, and fascinating character been more fully displayed; he was literally seductive. In the morning, creditors and visitors filled the rooms in which he lived; he came in smiling, with an easy manner, with so much loftiness and grace, that the people forgot their wants and their claims, and looked as if they had only come to see him. His animation was irresistible; no one had a more dazzling wit; he had an inexhaustible fund of puns, contrivances, sallies, novel ideas. Lord Byron, who was a good judge, said that he had never heard nor conceived of a more extraordinary conversation. Men spent nights in listening to him; no one equalled him during a supper; even when drunk he retained his wit. One day he was picked up by the watch, and

[1] *The Works of Lord Byron*, 18 vols., ed. Moore, 1832, ii. p. 303.

they asked him his name; he gravely answered, 'Wilberforce.' With strangers and inferiors he had no arrogance or stiffness; he possessed in an eminent degree that unreserved character which always exhibits itself complete, which holds back none of its light, which abandons and gives itself up; he wept when he received a sincere eulogy from Lord Byron, or in recounting his miseries as a plebeian parvenu. Nothing is more charming than these effusions; they set out by placing people on a footing of peace and amity; men suddenly desert their defensive and precautionary attitude; they perceive that he is giving himself up to them, and they give themselves up to him; the outpouring of his heart excites the outpouring of theirs. A minute later, Sheridan's impetuous and sparkling individuality flashes out; his wit explodes, rattles like a discharge of fire-arms; he takes the conversation to himself, with a sustained brilliancy, a variety, an inexhaustible vigour, till five o'clock in the morning. Against such a necessity for launching out in unconsidered speech, of indulgence, of self-outpouring, a man had need be well on his guard; life cannot be passed like a holiday; it is a strife against others and against oneself; people must think of the future, mistrust themselves, make provision; there is no subsisting without the precaution of a shopkeeper, the calculation of a tradesman. If you sup too often, you will end by not having wherewithal to dine upon; when your pockets have holes in them, the shillings will fall out; nothing is more of a truism, but it is true. Sheridan's debts accumulated, his digestion failed. He lost his seat in Parliament, his theatre was burned; sheriff's officer succeeded sheriff's officer, and they had long been in possession of his house. At last, a bailiff arrested the dying man in his bed, and was for taking him off in his blankets; nor would he let him go until threatened with a lawsuit, the doctor having declared that the sick man would die on the road. A certain newspaper cried shame on the great lords who suffered such a man to end so miserably; they hastened to leave their cards at his door. In the funeral procession two brothers of the king, dukes, earls, bishops, the first men in England, carried or followed the body. A singular contrast, picturing in abstract all his talent, and all his life: lords at his funeral, and bailiffs at his death-bed.

His theatre was in accordance; all was brilliant, but the metal was not all his own, nor was it of the best quality. His comedies were comedies of society, the most amusing ever written, but merely comedies of society. Imagine the exaggerated caricatures artists are wont to improvise, in a drawing-room where they are intimate, about eleven o'clock in the evening. His first play, *The Rivals*, and afterwards his *Duenna*, and *The Critic*, are loaded with these, and scarce anything else. There is Mrs Malaprop, a silly pretentious woman, who uses grand words higgledy-piggledy, delighted with herself, in 'a nice derangement of epitaphs' before her nouns, and declaring that her niece is 'as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile.' There is

Mr. Acres, who suddenly becomes a hero, gets engaged in a duel, and being led on the ground, calculates the effect of the balls, thinks of his will, burial, embalmment, and wishes he were at home. There is another in the person of a clumsy and cowardly servant, of an irascible and brawling father, of a sentimental and romantic young lady, of a touchy Irish duellist. All this jogs and jostles on, without much order, amid the surprises of a twofold plot, by aid of expedients and rencontres, without the full and regular government of a dominating idea. But in vain one perceives it is a patchwork; the high spirit carries off everything: we laugh heartily; every single scene has its facetious and rapid movement; we forget that the clumsy valet makes remarks as witty as Sheridan himself,[1] and that the irascible gentleman speaks as well as the most elegant of writers.[2] The playwright is also a man of letters; if, through mere animal and social spirit, he wished to amuse others and to amuse himself, he does not forget the interests of his talent and the care for his reputation. He has taste, he appreciates the refinements of style, the worth of a new image, of a striking contrast, of a witty and well-considered insinuation. He has, above all, wit, a wonderful conversational wit, the art of rousing and sustaining the attention, of being sharp, varied, of taking his hearers unawares, of throwing in a repartee, of setting folly in relief, of accumulating one after another witticisms and happy phrases. He brought himself to perfection subsequently to his first play, having acquired theatrical experience, writing and erasing; trying various scenes, recasting, arranging; his desire was that nothing should arrest the interest, no improbability shock the spectator; that his comedy might glide on with the precision, certainty, uniformity of a good machine. He invents jests, replaces them by better ones; he whets his jokes, binds them up like a sheaf of arrows, and writes at the bottom of the last page, 'Finished, thank God.—Amen.' He is right, for the work costs him some pains; he will not write a second. This kind of writing, artificial and condensed as the satires of La Bruyère, is like a cut phial, into which the author has distilled without reservation all his reflections, his reading, his understanding.

What is there in this celebrated *School for Scandal*? And what is there, that has cast upon English comedy, which day by day was being

[1] *Acres.* Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

David. I say, then, it would be but civil in honour never to risk the loss of a gentleman.—Look ye, master, this honour seems to me to be a marvellous false friend; ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant.—*The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 1828: *The Rivals*, iv. 1.

[2] *Sir Anthony.*—Nay, but Jack, such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! O Jack, lips, smiling at their own discretion! and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting, more lovely in sullenness!—*The Rivals*, iii. 1.

more and more forgotten, the radiance of a last success? Sheridan took two characters from Fielding, Blifil, and Tom Jones; two plays of Molière, *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartufe;* and from these puissant materials, condensed with admirable cleverness, he has constructed the most brilliant firework imaginable. Molière has only one female slanderer, Célimène; the other characters serve only to give her a cue: there is quite enough of such a jeering woman; she rails on within certain bounds, without hurry, like a true queen of the drawing-room, who has time to converse, who knows that she is listened to, who listens to herself: she is a woman of society, who preserves the tone of refined conversation; and in order to smooth down the harshness, her slanders are interrupted by the calm reason and sensible discourse of the amiable Eliante. Molière represents the malice of the world without exaggeration; but here they are rather caricatured than depicted. 'Ladies, your servant,' says Sir Peter; 'mercy upon me! the whole set—a character dead at every sentence.'[1] In fact, they are ferocious: it is a regular quarry; they even befoul one another, to deepen the outrage. Mrs. Candour remarks: 'Yesterday Miss Prim assured me, that Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon are now become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted, that a certain widow in the next street had got rid of her dropsy, and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. . . . I was informed, too, that Lord Flimsy caught his wife at a house of no extraordinary fame; and that Tom Saunter and Sir Harry Idle were to measure swords on a similar occasion.'[2] Their animosity is so bitter that they descend to the part of buffoons. The most elegant person in the room, Lady Teazle, shows her teeth to ape a ridiculous lady, draws her mouth on one side, and makes faces. There is no pause, no softening; sarcasms fly like pistol-shots. The author had laid in a stock, he had to use them up. It is he speaking through the mouth of each of his characters; he gives them all the same wit, that is his own, his irony, his harshness, his picturesque vigour; whatever they are, clowns, fops, old women, girls, no matter, the author's main business is to break out into twenty explosions in a minute:

'*Mrs Candour.* Well, I will never join in the ridicule of a friend; so I tell my cousin Ogle, and ye all know what pretensions she has to beauty.

Crab. She has the oddest countenance—a collection of features from all the corners of the globe.

Sir Benjamin. She has, indeed, an Irish front.

Crab. Caledonian locks.

Sir B. Dutch nose.

Crab. Austrian lips.

Sir B. The complexion of a Spaniard.

Crab. And teeth *à la Chinoise.*

[1] *The School for Scandal,* ii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* i. 1

Sir B. In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa, where no two guests are of a nation.

Crab. Or a congress at the close of a general war, where every member seems to have a different interest, and the nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.'[1]

Or again:

'*Crab.* Sad news upon his arrival, to hear how your brother has gone on!

Joseph Surface. I hope no busy people have already prejudiced his uncle against him—he may reform.

Sir Benjamin. True, he may; for my part, I never thought him so utterly void of principle as people say, and though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of amongst the Jews.

Crab. Foregad, if the Old Jewry was a ward, Charles would be an alderman, for he pays as many annuities as the Irish Tontine; and when he is sick, they have prayers for his recovery in all the Synagogues.

Sir B. Yet no man lives in greater splendor.—They tell me, when he entertains his friends, he can sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities, have a score of tradesmen waiting in the anti-chamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.'[2]

And again:

'*Sir B.* Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you, but depend on't, your brother is utterly undone.

Crab. Oh! undone as ever man was—can't raise a guinea.

Sir B. Everything is sold, I am told, that was moveable.

Crab. Not a moveable left, except some old bottles and some pictures, and they seem to be framed in the wainscot, egad.

Sir B. I am sorry to hear also some bad stories of him.

Crab. Oh! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir B. But, however, he's your brother.

Crab. Ay! as he is your brother—we'll tell you more another opportunity.'[3]

In this manner has he pointed, multiplied, thrust to the quick, the measured epigrams of Molière. And yet is it possible to grow weary of such a well-sustained discharge of malice and witticisms?

Observe also the change which the hypocrite undergoes under his treatment. Doubtless all the grandeur disappears from the part. Joseph Surface does not uphold, like Tartufe, the interest of the comedy; he does not possess, like his ancestor, the nature of a cabman, the boldness of a man of action, the manners of a beadle, the neck and shoulders of a monk. He is merely selfish and cautious; if he is engaged in an intrigue, it is rather against his will; he is only half-hearted in the matter, like a correct young man, well dressed, with a fair income, timorous and fastidious by nature, discreet in manners, and without violent passions; all about him is soft and polished, he takes his tone from the times, he makes no display of religion, though he does of morality; he is a man of measured speech, of lofty sentiments, a dis-

[1] *The School for Scandal*, ii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* i. 1 [3] *Ibid.*

ciple of Johnson or of Rousseau, a dealer in set phrases. There is nothing on which to construct a drama in this commonplace person; and the fine situations which Sheridan takes from Molière lose half their force through depending on such pitiful support. But how this insufficiency is covered by the quickness, abundance, naturalness of the incidents! how skill makes up for everything! how it seems capable of supplying everything, even genius! how the spectator laughs to see Joseph caught in his sanctuary like a fox in his hole; obliged to hide the wife, then to conceal the husband; forced to run from one to the other; busy in hiding the one behind his screen, and the other in his closet; reduced in casting himself into his own snares, in justifying those whom he wished to ruin, the husband in the eyes of the wife, the nephew in the eyes of the uncle; to ruin the only man whom he wished to justify, namely, the precious and immaculate Joseph Surface; to turn out in the end ridiculous, odious, baffled, confounded, in spite of his adroitness, even by reason of his adroitness, step by step, without quarter or remedy; to sneak off, poor fox, with his tail between his legs, his skin spoiled, amid hootings and laughter! And how, at the same time, side by side with this, the naggings of Sir Peter and his wife, the suppers, songs, the picture sale at the spendthrift's house, weave a comedy in a comedy, and renew the interest by renewing the attention! We cease to think of the meagreness of the characters, as we cease to think of the variation from truth; we are willingly carried away by the vivacity of the action, dazzled by the brilliancy of the dialogue; we are charmed, applaud; admit that, after all, next to great inventive faculty, animation and wit are the most agreeable gifts in the world: we appreciate them in their season, and find that they also have their place in the literary banquet; and that if they are not worth as much as the substantial joints, the natural and generous wines of the first course, at least they furnish the dessert.

The dessert over, we must leave the table. After Sheridan, we leave it forthwith. Henceforth comedy languishes, fails; there is nothing left but farce, such as Townley's *High Life Below Stairs*, the burlesques of George Colman, a tutor, an old maid, countrymen and their dialect; caricature succeeds painting; Punch raises a laugh when the days of Reynolds and Gainsborough are over. There is nowhere in Europe, at the present time, a more barren stage; good company abandons it to the people. The form of society, and the spirit which had called it into being, have disappeared. Vivacity, and the subject of original conceptions, had peopled the stage of the Renaissance in England,—a surfeit which, unable to display itself in systematic argument, or to express itself in philosophical ideas, found its natural outlet only in mimic action and talking characters. The wants of polished society had nourished the English comedy of the seventeenth century,—a society which, accustomed to the representations of the court and the displays of the world, sought on the stage the copy of its intercourse

and its drawing-rooms. With the decadence of the court and the check of mimic invention, the genuine drama and the genuine comedy disappeared; they passed from the stage into books. The reason of it is, that people no longer live in public, like the embroidered dukes of Louis XIV. and Charles II., but in their family, or at the study table; the novel replaces the theatre at the same time as citizen life replaces the life of the court.

HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

VOLUME II.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

BOOK III.—THE CLASSIC AGE.

		PAGE
CHAP. II.	DRYDEN,	1
III.	THE REVOLUTION,	45
IV.	ADDISON,	89
V.	SWIFT,	116
VI.	THE NOVELISTS,	151
VII.	THE POETS,	193

BOOK IV.—MODERN LIFE.

CHAP. I.	IDEAS AND PRODUCTIONS,	223
II.	LORD BYRON,	271
III.	THE PAST AND THE PRESENT,	313

BOOK V.—MODERN AUTHORS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE,		337
CHAP. I.	THE NOVEL.—DICKENS,	338
II.	THE NOVEL CONTINUED.—THACKERAY,	367
III.	CRITICISM AND HISTORY.—MACAULAY,	4 2
IV.	PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY.—CARLYLE,	435
V.	PHILOSOPHY.—STUART MILL,	477
VI.	POETRY.—TENNYSON,	518

INDEX, 543

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BOOK III.

THE CLASSIC AGE.

CHAPTER II.

Dryden.

I. Dryden's beginnings—Close of the poetic age—Cause of literary decline and regeneration.

II. Family—Education—Studies—Reading—Habits—Position—Character—Audience—Friendships—Quarrels—Harmony of his life and talent.

III. The theatres re-opened and transformed—The new public and the new taste—Dramatic theories of Dryden—His judgment of the old English theatre—His judgment of the new French theatre—Composite works—Incongruities of his drama—*Tyrannic Love*—Grossness of his characters—*The Indian Emperor, Aureng-zebe, Almanzor.*

IV. Style of his drama—Rhymed verse—Flowery diction—Pedantic tirades—Want of agreement between the classical style and romantic events—How Dryden borrows and mars the inventions of Shakspeare and Milton—Why this drama fell to the ground.

V. Merits of this drama—Characters of Antony and Don Sebastian—Otway—Life—Works.

VI. Dryden as a writer—Kind, scope, and limits of his mind—Clumsiness in flattery and obscenity—Heaviness in dissertation and discussion—Vigour and fundamental uprightness.

VII. How literature in England is occupied with politics and religion—Political poems of Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal*—Religious poems, *Religio Laici, The Hind and the Panther*—Bitterness and virulence of these poems—*Mac Flecknoe.*

VIII. Rise of the art of writing—Difference between the stamp of mind of the artistic and classic ages—Dryden's manner of writing—Sustained and oratorical diction.

IX. Lack of general ideas in this age and this stamp of mind—Dryden's translations—Adaptations—Imitations—Tales and letters—Faults—Merits—

Gravity of his character, brilliancy of his inspiration, fits and starts of poetic eloquence—*Alexander's Feast,* a song in honour of S. Cecilia's Day.

X. Dryden's latter days—Wretchedness—Poverty—Wherein his work is incomplete—Death.

COMEDY has led us a long way; we must return and consider other kind of writings. A higher spirit moves amidst the great current. In the history of this talent we shall find the history of the English classical spirit, its structure, its gaps and its powers, its formation and its development.

I.

The subject is a young man, Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox at the age of nineteen:

> 'His body was an orb, his sublime soul
> Did move on virtue's and on learning's pole;
> . . . Come, learned Ptolemy, and trial make
> If thou this hero's altitude canst take.
>
> . . . Blisters with pride swell'd, which through 's flesh did sprout
> Like rose-buds, stuck i' the lily skin about.
> Each little pimple had a tear in it,
> To wail the fault its rising did commit. . . .
>
> Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,
> The cabinet of a richer soul within?
> No comet need foretel his change drew on
> Whose corpse might seem a constellation.'[1]

With such a fine specimen, Dryden, the greatest poet of the classical age, made his appearance.

Such enormities indicate the close of a literary age. Excess of folly in poetry, like excess of injustice in political matters, lead up to and foretell revolutions. The Renaissance, unchecked and original, abandoned the minds of men to the fire and caprices of imagination, the oddities, curiosities, outbreaks of an inspiration which cares only to content itself, breaks out into singularities, has need of novelties, and loves audacity and extravagance, as reason loves justice and truth. After the extinction of genius folly remained; after the removal of inspiration nothing was left but absurdity. Formerly the internal disorder and dash produced and excused *concetti* and wild flights; thenceforth men threw them out in cold blood, by calculation and without excuse. Formerly they expressed the state of the mind, now they belie it. So are literary revolutions accomplished. The form, no longer original or spontaneous, but imitated and passed from hand to hand, outlives the old spirit which had created it,

[1] Dryden's *Works*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 2d ed., 18 vols., 1821, xi. 94

and is in opposition to the new spirit which destroys it. This preliminary strife and progressive transformation make up the life of Dryden, and account for his impotence and his falls, his talent and his success.

II.

Dryden's beginnings are in striking contrast with those of the poets of the Renaissance, actors, vagabonds, soldiers, who were tossed about from the first in all the contrasts and miseries of active life. He was born in 1631, of a good family; his grandfather and uncle were baronets; Sir Gilbert Pickering, his relative, was a knight, member of Parliament, one of Cromwell's council of twenty-one, one of the great office-holders of the new court. Dryden was brought up in an excellent school, under Dr. Busby, then in high repute; after which he passed four years at Cambridge. Having inherited by his father's death a small estate, he used his liberty and fortune only to maintain him in his studious life, and continued in seclusion at the University for three years more. Here you see the regular habits of an honourable and well-to-do family, the discipline of a connected and solid education, the taste for classical and exact studies. Such circumstances announce and prepare, not an artist, but a man of letters.

I find the same inclination and the same signs in the remainder of his life, private or public. He regularly spends his mornings in writing or reading, then dines with his family. His reading was that of a man of culture and a critical mind, who does not think of amusing or exciting himself, but who learns and judges. Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius were his favourite authors; he translated several; their names were always on his pen; he discusses their opinions and their merits, feeding himself on this reasoning which oratorical customs had imprinted on all the works of the Roman mind. He is familiar with the new French literature, the heir of the Latin, with Corneille and Racine, Boileau, Rapin and Bossu;[1] he reasons with them, often in their spirit, writes reflectively, seldom fails to arrange some good theory to justify each of his new works. He knew very well the literature of his own country, though sometimes not very accurately, gave to authors their due rank, classified the different kinds of writing, went back as far as old Chaucer, whom he transcribed and put into a modern dress. His mind thus filled, he would go in the afternoon to Will's coffeehouse, the great literary rendezvous: young poets, students fresh from the University, literary dilettante crowded round his chair, carefully placed in summer near the balcony,

[1] Rapin (1621–1687), a French Jesuit, a modern Latin poet and literary critic. Bossu, or properly Lebossu (1631–1680), wrote a *Traité du Poème épique*, which had a great success in its day. Both critics are now completely forgotten. — Tr.

in winter by the fireside, thinking themselves fortunate to get in a word, or a pinch of snuff respectfully extracted from his learned snuff-box. For indeed he was the monarch of taste and the umpire of letters; he criticised novelties—Racine's last tragedy, Blackmore's heavy epic, Swift's first poems; slightly vain, praising his own writings, to the extent of saying that 'no one had ever composed or will ever compose a finer ode' than his on Alexander's Feast; but gossipy, fond of that interchange of ideas which discussion never fails to produce, capable of enduring contradiction, and admitting his adversary to be in the right. These manners show that literature had become a matter of study rather than of inspiration, an employment for the taste rather than for the enthusiasm, a source of distraction rather than of emotion.

His audience, his friendships, his actions, his strifes, had the same tendency. He lived amongst great men and courtiers, in a society of artificial manners and measured language. He had married the daughter of Thomas Earl of Berkshire; he was historiographer, then poet-laureate. He often saw the king and the princes. He dedicated each of his works to some lord, in a laudatory, flunkeyish preface, bearing witness to his intimate acquaintance with the great. He received a purse of gold for each dedication, went to return thanks; introduces some of these lords under pseudonyms in his *Essay on the Dramatic Art;* wrote introductions for the works of others, called them Mæcenas, Tibullus, or Pollio; discussed with them literary works and opinions. The re-establishment of the court had brought back the art of conversation, vanity, the necessity for appearing to be a man of letters and of possessing good taste, all the company-manners which are the source of classical literature, and which teach men the art of speaking well.[1] On the other hand, literature, brought under the influence of society, entered into society's interests, and first of all in petty private quarrels. Whilst men of letters learned etiquette, courtiers learned how to write. They soon became jumbled together, and naturally fell to blows. The Duke of Buckingham wrote a parody on Dryden, *The Rehearsal*, and took infinite pains to teach the chief actor Dryden's tone and gestures. Later, Rochester took up the cudgels against the poet, supported Settle against him, and hired a band of ruffians to beat him. Besides this, Dryden had quarrels with Shadwell and a crowd of others, and finally with Blackmore and Jeremy Collier. To crown all, he entered into the strife of political parties and religious sects, fought for the Tories and Anglicans, then for the Roman Catholics; wrote *The Medal, Absalom and Achitophel*, against the Whigs; *Religio Laici* against Dissenters and Papists; then *The Hind and Panther* for James II., with the logic of controversy and the bitterness of party. It is a long way from this

[1] In his *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada* v. 226, Dryden says: 'Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court.

combative and argumentative existence to the reveries and seclusion of the true poet. Such circumstances teach the art of writing clearly and soundly, methodical and connected discussion, strong and exact style, banter and refutation, eloquence and satire: these gifts are necessary to make a man of letters heard or believed, and the mind enters compulsorily upon a track when it is the only one that can conduct it to its goal. Dryden entered upon it spontaneously. In his second production,[1] the abundance of well-ordered ideas, the oratorical energy and harmony, the simplicity, the gravity, the heroic and Roman spirit, announce a classic genius, the relative not of Shakspeare, but of Corneille, capable not of dramas, but of discussions.

III.

And yet, at first, he devoted himself to the drama: he wrote twenty-seven pieces, and signed an agreement with the actors of the King's Theatre to supply them with three every year. The theatre, forbidden under the Commonwealth, had just re-opened with extraordinary magnificence and success. The rich scenes made moveable, the women's parts no longer played by boys, but by women, the novel and splendid wax-lights, the machinery, the recent popularity of actors who had become heroes of fashion, the scandalous importance of the actresses, who were mistresses of the aristocracy and of the king, the example of the court and the imitation of France, drew spectators in crowds. The thirst for pleasure, long repressed, knew no bounds. Men indemnified themselves for the long abstinence imposed by fanatical Puritans; eyes and ear, disgusted with gloomy faces, nasal pronunciation, official ejaculations on sin and damnation, satiated themselves with sweet singing, sparkling dress, the seduction of voluptuous dances. They wished to enjoy life, and that in a new fashion; for a new world, that of the courtiers and the idle, had been formed. The abolition of feudal tenures, the vast increase of commerce and wealth, the concourse of landed proprietors, who let their lands and came to London to enjoy the pleasures of the town and to court the favours of the king, had installed on the summit of society, in England as in France, rank, authority, the manners and tastes of the world of fashion, of the idle, the drawing-room frequenters, lovers of pleasure, conversation, wit, and breeding, occupied with the piece in vogue, less to amuse themselves than to criticise it. Thus was Dryden's drama built up; the poet, greedy of glory and pressed for money, found here both money and glory, and was half an innovator, with a large reinforcement of theories and prefaces, diverging from the old English drama, approaching the new French tragedy, attempting a compromise between classical eloquence and romantic truth, accommodating himself as well as he could to the new public, which paid and applauded him.

[1] *Heroic stanzas to the memory of Oliver Cromwell.*

'The language, wit, and conversation of our age, are improved and refined above the last. . . . Let us consider in what the refinement of a language principally consists; that is, "either in rejecting such old words, or phrases, which are ill-sounding or improper; or in admitting new, which are more proper, more sounding, and more significant." . . . Let any man, who understands English, read diligently the works of Shakespeare and Fletcher, and I dare undertake, that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense. . . . Many of (their plots) were made up of some ridiculous incoherent story, which in one play many times took up the business of an age. I suppose I need not name *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, nor the historical plays of Shakespeare; besides many of the rest, as the *Winter's Tale*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, which were either grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment. . . . I could easily demonstrate, that our admired Fletcher neither understood correct plotting, nor that which they call the decorum of the stage. . . . The reader will see Philaster wounding his mistress, and afterwards his boy, to save himself. . . . His shepherd falls twice into the former indecency of wounding women.'[1]

Fletcher nowhere permits kings to retain the royal dignity. Moreover, the action of these authors' plays is always barbarous. They introduce battles on the stage; they transport the scene in a moment to a distance of twenty years or five hundred leagues, and a score of times consecutively in one act; they jumble together three or four different actions, especially in the historical dramas. But they sin most in style. Dryden says of Shakspeare:

'Many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.'[2]

Ben Jonson himself often has bad plots, redundancies, barbarisms:

'Well-placing of words, for the sweetness of pronunciation, was not known till Mr. Waller introduced it.'[3]

All, in short, descend to quibbles, low and common expressions:

'In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours. . . . Besides the want of education and learning, they wanted the benefit of converse. Gentlemen will now be entertained with the follies of each other; and, though they allow Cob and Tibb to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard, or with their rags.'[4]

For these gentlemen we must now write, and especially for 'reasonable men;' for it is not enough to have wit or to love tragedy, in order to be a good critic: we must possess a solid knowledge and a lofty reason, know Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and pronounce judgment according to their rules.[5] These rules, based upon observation and logic, prescribe unity of action; that this action should have a beginning, middle, and end;

[1] *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada* iv. 213. [2] Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, vi. 239

[3] *Defence of the Epilogue of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 219.

[4] *Ibid.* 225. [5] Preface to *All for Love*, v. 306.

that its parts should proceed naturally one from the other; that it should excite terror and pity, so as to inform and improve us; that the characters should be distinct, harmonious, conformable with tradition or the design of the poet. Such, says Dryden, will be the new tragedy, closely allied, it seems, to the French, especially as he quotes Bossu and Rapin, as if he took them for instructors.

Yet it differs from it, and Dryden enumerates all that an English pit can blame in the French stage. He says:

'The beauties of the French poesy are the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions. . . . He who will look upon their plays which have been written till these last ten years, or thereabouts, will find it an hard matter to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. Corneille himself, their arch-poet, what has he produced except the *Liar?* and you know how it was cried up in France; but when it came upon the English stage, though well translated, . . . the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of Fletcher's or Ben Jonson's. . . . Their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read, . . . their speeches being so many declamations. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced, to comply with the gravity of a churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey;* they are not so properly to be called plays as long discourses of reasons of state; and *Polieucte*, in matters of religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our organs. Since that time it is grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, like our parsons. . . . I deny not but this may suit well enough with the French; for as we, who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our plays, so they, who are of an airy and gay temper, come thither to make themselves more serious.'[1]

As for the tumults and combats which they relegate behind the scenes, 'nature has so formed our countrymen to fierceness, . . . they will scarcely suffer combats and other objects of horror to be taken from them.'[2] Thus the French, by fettering themselves with these scruples,[3]

[1] *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 337. [2] *Ibid.* 343.

[3] In the preface of *All for Love*, v. 308, Dryden says: 'In this nicety of manners does the excellency of French poetry consist. Their heroes are the most civil people breathing, but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense; all their wit is in their ceremony; they want the genius which animates our stage. . . . Thus, their Hippolytus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death than accuse his step-mother to his father; and my critics, I am sure, will commend him for it: But we of grosser apprehensions are apt to think, that this excess of generosity is not practicable, but with fools and madmen. . . . But take Hippolytus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part, to set the saddle on the right horse, and chuse rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain. . . . (The poet) has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, taught him to make love, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolite.' This criticism shows in a small compass all the common sense and freedom of thought of Dryden; but, at the same time, all the coarseness of his education and of his age.

and confining themselves in their unities and their rules, have removed action from their stage, and brought themselves down to unbearable monotony and dryness. They lack originality, naturalness, variety, fulness.

> '. . . Contented to be thinly regular. . . .
> Their tongue enfeebled is refined too much,
> And, like pure gold, it bends at every touch.
> Our sturdy Teuton yet will art obey,
> More fit for manly thought, and strengthened with allay.'[1]

Let them laugh as much as they like at Fletcher and Shakspeare; there is in them 'a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the writing than there is in any of the French.'

Though exaggerated, this criticism is good; and because it is good, I mistrust the works which the writer is to produce. It is dangerous for an artist to be excellent in theory; the creative spirit is hardly consonant with the criticising spirit: he who, quietly seated on the shore, discusses and compares, is hardly capable of plunging straight and boldly into the stormy sea of invention. Moreover, Dryden holds himself too evenly poised betwixt the moods; original artists love solely and without justice a certain idea and a certain world; the rest disappears from their eyes; confined in one region of art, they deny or scorn the other; it is because they are limited that they are strong. We see beforehand that Dryden, pushed one way by his English mind, will be drawn another way by his French rules; that he will alternately venture and restrain himself; that he will attain mediocrity, that is, platitude; that by reason of his faults he will fall into incongruities, that is, into absurdities. All original art is self-regulated, and no original art can be regulated from without: it carries its own counterpoise, and does not receive it from elsewhere; it constitutes an inviolable whole; it is an animated existence, which lives on its own blood, and which languishes or dies if deprived of some of its blood and supplied from the veins of another. Shakspeare's imagination cannot be guided by Racine's reason, nor Racine's reason be exalted by Shakspeare's imagination; each is good in itself, and excludes its rival; to unite them would be to produce a bastard, a sick child and a monster. Disorder, violent and sudden action, harsh words, horror, depth, truth, exact imitation of reality, and the lawless outbursts of mad passions,—these features of Shakspeare become each other. Order, measure, eloquence, aristocratic refinement, worldly urbanity, exquisite painting of delicacy and virtue, all Racine's features suit each other. It would destroy the one to attenuate, the other to inflame him. Their whole being and beauty consist in the agreement of their parts: to mar this agreement would be to abolish their being and their beauty. In order to produce, we must invent a personal and harmonious conception; we must not

[1] Epistle xiv., to Mr Motteux, xi. 70.

mingle two strange and opposite ones. Dryden has left undone what he should have done, and has done what he should not have done.

He had, moreover, the worst of audiences, debauched and frivolous, void of individual taste, floundering amid confused recollections of the national literature and deformed imitations of foreign literature, expecting nothing from the stage but the pleasure of the senses or the gratification of their curiosity. In reality, the drama, like every work of art, only makes sensible a profound idea of man and of existence; there is a hidden philosophy under its circumvolutions and violences, and the audience ought to be capable of comprehending it, as the poet is of conceiving it. The hearer must have reflected or felt with energy or refinement, in order to take in energetic or refined thoughts; Hamlet and Iphigénie will never move a vulgar roisterer or a lover of money. The character who weeps on the stage only rehearses our own tears; our interest is but that of sympathy; and the drama is like an external conscience, which shows us what we are, what we love, what we have felt. What could the drama teach to gamesters like Saint Albans, drunkards like Rochester, prostitutes like Castlemaine, old children like Charles II.? What spectators were those coarse epicureans, incapable even of an assumed decency, lovers of brutal pleasures, barbarians in their sports, obscene in words, void of honour, humanity, politeness, who made the court a house of ill fame! The splendid decorations, change of scenes, the patter of long verse and forced sentiments, the observance of a few rules imported from Paris,—such was the natural food of their vanity and folly, and such the theatre of the English Restoration.

I take one of these tragedies, very celebrated in time past, *Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr*,—a fine title, and fit to make a stir. The royal martyr is Saint Catharine, a princess of royal blood as it appears, who is brought before the tyrant Maximin. She confesses her faith, and a pagan philosopher Apollonius is set loose against her, to refute her. Maximin says:

> 'War is my province!—Priest, why stand you mute?
> You gain by heaven, and, therefore, should dispute.'

Thus encouraged, the priest argues; but St. Catharine replies in the following words:

> '. . . Reason with your fond religion fights,
> For many gods are many infinites;
> This to the first philosophers was known,
> Who, under various names, ador'd but one.'[1]

Apollonius scratches his ear a little, and then answers that there are great truths and good moral rules in paganism. The pious logician immediately replies:

[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1.

'Then let the whole dispute concluded be
Betwixt these rules, and Christianity.'[1]

Being nonplussed, Apollonius is converted on the spot, insults the prince, who, finding St. Catharine very beautiful, becomes suddenly enamoured, and makes jokes:

'Absent, I may her martyrdom decree,
But one look more will make that martyr me.'[2]

In this dilemma he sends Placidius, 'a great officer,' to St. Catharine; the great officer quotes and praises the gods of Epicurus; forthwith the saint propounds the doctrine of final causes, which upsets that of atoms. Maximin comes himself, and says:

'Since you neglect to answer my desires,
Know, princess, you shall burn in other fires.'[3]

Thereupon she beards and defies him, calls him a slave, and walks off. Touched by these delicate manners, he wishes to marry her lawfully, and to repudiate his wife. Still, to omit no expedient, he employs a magician, who utters invocations (on the stage), summons the infernal spirits, and brings up a troop of Spirits: these dance and sing voluptuous songs about the bed of St. Catharine. Her guardian-angel comes and drives them away. As a last resource, Maximin has a wheel brought on the stage, on which to expose St. Catharine and her mother. Whilst the executioners are going to strip the saint, a modest angel descends in the nick of time, and breaks the wheel; after which they are carried off, and their throats are cut behind the wings. Add to these pretty inventions a twofold intrigue, the love of Maximin's daughter Valeria for Porphyrius, captain of the Prætorian bands, and that of Porphyrius for Berenice, Maximin's wife; then a sudden catastrophe, three deaths, and the triumph of the good people, who get married and interchange polite phrases. Such is this tragedy, which is called French-like; and most of the others are like it. In *Secret Love*, in *Marriage à la Mode*, in *Aureng-Zebe*, in the *Indian Emperor*, and especially in the *Conquest of Granada*, everything is extravagant. People cut one another to pieces, take towns, stab each other, shout lustily. These dramas have just the truth and naturalness of the libretto of an opera. Incantations abound; a spirit appears in the *Indian Emperor*, and declares that the Indian gods 'are driven to exile from their native lands.' Ballets are also there; Vasquez and Pizarro, seated in 'a pleasant grotto,' watch like conquerors the dances of the Indian girls, who gambol voluptuously about them.

[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* 3. 1. This Maximin has a turn for jokes. Porphyrius, to whom he offers his daughter in marriage, says that 'the distance was so vast;' where upon Maximin replies: 'Yet heaven and earth, which so remote appear, are by the air which flows betwixt them, near.' (2. 1).

Scenes worthy of Lulli[1] are not wanting; Almeria, like Armide, comes to slay Cortez in his sleep, and suddenly conceives a love for him. Yet the libretti of the opera have no incongruities; they avoid all which might shock the imagination or the eyes; they are written for men of taste, who shun ugliness and heaviness of any sort. Would you believe it? In the *Indian Emperor*, Montezuma is tortured on the stage, and to cap all, a priest tries to convert him in the meanwhile.[2] I recognise in this frightful pedantry the handsome cavaliers of the time, logicians and hangmen, who fed on controversy, and for pleasure went to look at the tortures of the Puritans. I recognise behind these heaps of improbabilities and adventures the puerile and worn-out courtiers, who, sodden with wine, were past seeing discordances, and whose nerves were only stirred by the shock of surprises and the barbarity of events.

Let us go still further. Dryden would set up on his stage the beauties of French tragedy, and in the first place, nobility of sentiments. Is it enough to copy, as he does, phrases of chivalry? He would need a whole world, for a whole world is necessary to form noble souls. Virtue, in the French tragic poets, is founded on reason, religion, education, philosophy. Their characters have that uprightness of mind, that clearness of logic, that lofty judgment, which plant in a man settled maxims and self-government. We perceive in their company the doctrines of Bossuet and Descartes; with them, reflection aids conscience; the habits of society add tact and finesse. The avoidance of violent actions and physical horrors, the meed of order and fable, the art of disguising or shunning coarse or low-bred persons, the continuous perfection of the most measured and noble style, everything contributes to raise the stage to a sublime region, and we believe in higher souls by seeing them in a purer air. Can we believe in them in Dryden? Frightful or infamous characters every instant drag us down by their crudities in their own mire. Maximin,

[1] Lulli (1633–1687), a renowned Italian composer. *Armide* is one of his chief works.—TR.

[2] *Christian Priest.* But we by martyrdom our faith avow.
Montezuma. You do no more than I for ours do now.
To prove religion true,
If either wit or sufferings would suffice,
All faiths afford the constant and the wise,
And yet even they, by education sway'd,
In age defend what infancy obeyed,
Christian Priest. Since age by erring childhood is misled,
Refer yourself to our unerring head.
Montezuma. Man, and not err! what reason can you give?
Christian Priest. Renounce that carnal reason, and believe. . . .
Pizarro. Increase their pains, the cords are yet too slack.
—*The Indian Emperor*, ii. 2.

having stabbed Placidius, sits on his body, stabs him twice more, and says to the guards:

> 'Bring me Porphyrius and my empress dead:
> I would brave heaven, in my each hand a head.'[1]

Nourmahal, repulsed by her husband's son, insists four times with such indecent pedantry as this:

> 'And why this niceness to that pleasure shown,
> Where nature sums up all her joys in one. . . .
> Promiscuous love is nature's general law;
> For whosoever the first lovers were,
> Brother and sister made the second pair,
> And doubled by their love their piety. . . .
> You must be mine, that you may learn to live.'[2]

Illusion vanishes at once; instead of being in a room with noble characters, we meet with a mad prostitute and a drunken savage. Lift the masks; the others are little better. Almeria, to whom a crown is offered, says insolently:

> 'I take this garland, not as given by you,
> But as my merit, and my beauty's due.'[3]

Indamora, to whom an old courtier makes love, settles him with the boastfulness of an upstart and the coarseness of a kitchen-maid:

> 'Were I no queen, did you my beauty weigh,
> My youth in bloom, your age in its decay.'[4]

None of these heroines know how to conduct themselves; they look on impertinence as dignity, sensuality as tenderness; they have the

[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 5. 1. When dying Maximin says: 'And shoving back this earth on which I sit, I'll mount, and scatter all the Gods I hit.'

[2] *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 4. 1. Dryden thought he was imitating Racine, when six lines further on he makes Nourmahal say:

> 'I am not changed, I love my husband still;
> But love him as he was, when youthful grace
> And the first down began to shade his face:
> That image does my virgin flames renew,
> And all your father shines more bright in you.'

Racine's Phèdre (2. 5) thinks her husband Theseus dead, and says to her step son Hippolytus:

> 'Oui, prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée:
> Je l'aime . . .
> Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche,
> Charmant, jeune, traînant tous les cœurs après soi,
> Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous voi.
> Il avait votre port, vos yeux, votre langage;
> Cette noble pudeur colorait son visage.'

According to a note in Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden's works, Langbaine traces this speech also to Seneca's Hippolytus.—Tr.

[3] *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 2. [4] *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 2. 1.

recklessness of the courtesan, the jealousies of the grisette, the pettiness of a chapman's wife, the billingsgate of a fishwoman. The heroes are the most unpleasant of swashbucklers. Leonidas, first recognised as hereditary prince, then suddenly forsaken, consoles himself with this modest reflection:

> 'Tis true I am alone.
> So was the godhead, ere he made the world,
> And better served himself than served by nature.
> . . . I have scene enough within
> To exercise my virtue.' [1]

Shall I speak of that great trumpet-blower Almanzor, painted, as Dryden confesses, after Artaban,[2] a redresser of wrongs, a battalion-smiter, a destroyer of kingdoms?[3] They are but overcharged sentiments, extemporised devotions, exaggerated generosities, high-sounding brag of a clumsy chivalry; at bottom the characters are clods and barbarians, who have tried to deck themselves in French honour and fashionable politeness. And such, in fact, was the English court: it imitated that of Louis XIV. as a sign-painter imitates an artist. It had neither taste nor refinement, and wished to appear as if it possessed them. Panders and licentious women, bullying or butchering courtiers, who would go and see Harrison drawn, or mutilate Coventry, maids of honour who have awkward accidents at a ball,[4] or sell to the planters the convicts presented to them, a palace full of baying dogs and yelling gamesters, a king who would bandy obscenities in public with his half-naked mistresses,[5]—such was this illustrious society; from French modes they took but those of dress, from their noble sentiments but high-sounding words.

IV.

The second point worthy of imitation in classical tragedy is the style. Dryden, in fact, purifies his own, and renders it more clear, by introducing close reasoning and precise words. He has oratorical discussions like Corneille, well-delivered retorts, symmetrical, like a

[1] *Marriage à la Mode*, iv. 3. 1.

[2] 'The first image I had of him was from the Achilles of Homer, the next from Tasso's Rinaldo, and the third from the Artaban of Monsieur Calprenède.'—Preface to *Almanzor*.

[3] 'The Moors have heaven, and me to assist their cause' (i. 1).
'I'll whistle thy tame fortune after me' (b. 1).
He falls in love, and speaks thus:

> 'Tis he; I feel him now in every part;
> Like a new lord he vaunts about my heart,
> Surveys in state each corner of my breast,
> While poor fierce I, that was, am dispossessed' (3. 1).

[4] See vol. i. 471.

[5] Compare the song of the Zambra dance in the first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, 3. 1.

duel of argument. He has maxims vigorously enclosed in the compass of a single line, distinctions, developments, and the whole art of special pleading. He has happy antitheses, ornamental epithets, finely-wrought comparisons, and all the artifices of the literary mind. What is most striking is, that he abandons the dramatic and national verse, which is without rhyme, and the mixture of prose and verse common to the old authors, for a rhymed tragedy like the French, fancying that he is thus inventing a new species, which he calls heroic play. But in this transformation the good perished, the bad remains. For mark, rhyme is a different thing in different races. To an Englishman it resembles a song, and transports him at once to an ideal and fairy world. To a Frenchman it is only a conventionalism or an expediency, and transports him at once to an ante-chamber or a drawing-room; to him it is an ornamental dress and nothing more; if it mars prose, it ennobles it; it imposes respect, not enthusiasm, and changes a vulgar into a high-bred style. Moreover, in French aristocratic verse everything is connected; pedantry, logical machinery of every kind, is excluded from it; there is nothing more disagreeable to well-bred and refined persons than the scholastic rust. Images are rare, but always well kept up; bold poesy, real fantasy, have no place in it; their brilliancy and divergencies would derange the politeness and regular flow of the social world. The right word, the prominence of free expressions, are not to be met with in it; general terms, always rather threadbare, suit best the caution and niceties of select society. Dryden stumbles heavily against all these rules. His rhymes, to an Englishman's ear, scatter at once the whole illusion of the stage; they see that the characters who speak thus are but squeaking mannikins; he himself admits that his heroic tragedy is only fit to represent on the stage chivalric poems like those of Ariosto and Spenser.

Poetic dash gives the finishing stroke to all likelihood. Would you recognise the dramatic accent in this epic comparison?

> 'As some fair tulip, by a storm oppress'd,
> Shrinks up, and folds its silken arms to rest;
> And, bending to the blast, all pale and dead,
> Hears, from within, the wind sing round its head,—
> So, shrouded up, your beauty disappears:
> Unveil, my love, and lay aside your fears,
> The storm, that caused your fright, is pass'd and done.'[1]

What a singular triumphal song are these *concetti* of Cortez as he lands:

> 'On what new happy climate are we thrown,
> So long kept secret, and so lately known?
> As if our old world modestly withdrew,
> And here in private had brought forth a new.'[1]

[1] The first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, iv. 5 2
The Indian Emperor, ii. 1. 1.

Think how these patches of colour would contrast with the sober design of French dissertation. Here lovers lay siege with metaphors; there a wooer, in order to magnify the beauties of his mistress, says that 'bloody hearts lie panting in her hand.' In every page harsh or vulgar words spoil the regularity of a noble style. Ponderous logic is broadly displayed in the speeches of princesses. 'Two ifs,' says Lyndaraxa, 'scarce make one possibility.'[1] Dryden sets his college cap on the heads of these poor women. Neither he nor his characters are well brought up; they have taken from the French but the outer garb of the bar and the schools; they have left behind symmetrical eloquence, measured diction, elegance and delicacy. A while before, the licentious coarseness of the Restoration pierced the mask of the fine sentiments with which it was covered; now the rude English imagination breaks the oratorical mould in which it tried to enclose itself.

Let us turn the picture. Dryden would keep the foundation of the old English drama, and retains the abundance of events, the variety of plot, the surprise of accident, and the physical representation of bloody or violent action. He kills as many people as Shakspeare. Unfortunately, all poets are not justified in killing. When they take their spectators among murders and sudden accidents, they ought to have a hundred hidden preparations. Fancy a sort of rapture and romantic folly, a most daring style, eccentric and poetical, songs, pictures, reveries spoken aloud, frank scorn of all verisimilitude, a mixture of tenderness, philosophy, and mockery, all the retiring charms of varied feelings, all the whims of a buoyant fancy; the truth of events matters little. No one before *Cymbeline* or *As you Like it* was a politician or a historian; no one took these military processions, these accessions of princes, seriously; the spectators were present at dissolving views. They did not demand that things should proceed after the laws of nature; on the contrary, they willingly did require that they should proceed against the laws of nature. The irrationality is the charm. That new world must be all imagination; if it was only so by halves, no one would care to rise to it. This is why we do not rise to Dryden's. A queen dethroned, then suddenly set up again; a tyrant who finds his lost son, is deceived, adopts a girl in his place; a young prince led to punishment, who snatches the sword of a guard, and recovers his crown: such are the romances which constitute the *Maiden Queen* and the *Marriage à la Mode*. We can imagine what a display classical dissertations make in this medley; solid reason beats down imagination, stroke after stroke, to the ground. We cannot tell if the matter be a true portrait or a fancy painting; we remain suspended between truth and fancy; we should like either to get up to

[1] The first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, iv. 2. 1. This same Lyndaraxa says also to Abdalla (4. 2), 'Poor women's thoughts are all extempore, and logical, and coarse;' in Act 2. 1, to the same lover, who entreats her to make him 'happy, 'If I make you so, you shall pay my price.'

heaven or down to earth, and we jump down as quick as possible from the clumsy scaffolding where the poet would perch us.

On the other hand, when Shakspeare wishes to impress a doctrine, not raise a dream, he disposes us to it beforehand, but after another fashion. We naturally remain in doubt before a cruel action: we divine that the red irons which are about to put out the eyes of little Arthur are painted sticks, and that the six rascals who besiege Rome, are supernumeraries hired at a shilling a night. To conquer this mistrust we must employ the most natural style, circumstantial and rude imitation of the manners of the guardroom and of the alehouse; I could only believe in Jack Cade's sedition on hearing the dirty words of bestial lewdness and mobbish stupidity. You must let me have the jests, the coarse laughter, drunkenness, the manners of butchers and tanners, to make me imagine a mob or an election. So in murders, let me feel the fire of bubbling passion, the accumulation of despair or hate which have unchained the will and nerved the hand. When the unchecked words, the fits of rage, the convulsive ejaculations of exasperated desire, have brought me in contact with all the links of the inward necessity which has moulded the man and guided the crime, I shall no longer think whether the knife is bloody, because I shall feel with inner trembling the passion which has handled it. Must I verify the death of Shakspeare's Cleopatra? The strange laugh that bursts from her when the basket of saps is brought, the sudden tension of nerves, the flow of feverish words, the fitful gaiety, the coarse language, the torrent of ideas with which she overflows, have already made me sound all the depths of suicide,[1] and I have foreseen it from the beginning. This madness of an imagination, fired by climate and despotic power; these woman's, queen's, prostitute's nerves; this marvellous self-abandonment to all the raptures of invention and desire—these cries, tears, foam on the lips, tempest of insults, actions,

[1] 'He words me, girls; he words me, that I should not
Be noble to myself; but hark thee, Charmian. . . .
Now, Iras, what thinkest thou?
Thou, an Egyptian puppet, shalt be shown
In Rome, as well as I: mechanic slaves,
With greasy aprons, rules and hammers, shall
Uplift us to the view. . . .
Saucy lictors
Will catch at us, like strumpets: and scald rhymers
Ballad us out o' tune; the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore. . . .
Husband, I come:
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements

emotions; this promptitude to murder, announce the rage with which she would rush against the least obstacle and be dashed to pieces. What does Dryden effect in this matter with his written phrases? What of the maid, speaking in the author's words, who bids her half-mad mistress 'call reason to assist you?' What of such a Cleopatra as his, designed after Lady Castlemaine,[1] skilled in artifices and whimpering, voluptuous and a coquette, with neither the nobleness of virtue nor the greatness of crime:

> 'Nature meant me
> A wife; a silly, harmless, household dove,
> Fond without art, and kind without deceit.'[2]

Nay, certainly, or at least this turtle-dove would not have tamed or kept an Antony; a woman without any prejudices alone could do it, by the superiority of boldness and the fire of genius. I can see already from the title of the piece why Dryden has softened Shakspeare: *All for Love; or, the World well Lost.* What a wretchedness, to reduce such events to a pastoral, to excuse Antony, to praise Charles II. indirectly, to bleat as in a sheepfold! And such was the taste of his contemporaries. When Dryden wrote the *Tempest* after Shakspeare, and the *State of Innocence* after Milton, he again spoiled the ideas of his masters; he turned Eve and Miranda into courtesans;[3] he extinguished everywhere, under conventionalism and indecencies, the frankness, severity, delicacy, and charm of the original invention. By his side, Settle, Shadwell, Sir Robert Howard did worse. *The Empress of Morocco*, by Settle, was so admired, that the gentlemen and ladies of the court learned it by heart, to play at Whitehall before the king. And this was not a passing

I give to baser life. So; have you done?
Come, then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell. . . .
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?'—Shakspeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5. 2. These two last lines, referring to the asp, are sublime as the joke of a courtesan and an artist.

[1] 'Come to me, come, my soldier, to my arms!
You've been too long away from my embraces;
But, when I have you fast, and all my own,
With broken murmurs, and with amorous sighs,
I'll say, you were unkind, and punish you,
And mark you red with many an eager kiss.'—*All for Love*, v. 3. 1.

[2] *All for Love*, 4. 1.

[3] Dryden's Miranda says, in the *Tempest* (2. 2): 'And if I can but escape with life, I had rather be in pain nine months, as my father threatened, than lose my longing. Miranda has a sister; they quarrel, are jealous of each other, and so on. See also in *The State of Innocence*, 3. 1, the description which Eve gives of her happiness, and the ideas which her confidences suggest to Satan.

fancy; although modified, the taste was to endure. In vain poets rejected a part of the French alloy wherewith they had mixed their native metal; in vain they returned to the old unrhymed verses of Jonson and Shakspeare; in vain Dryden, in the parts of Antony, Ventidius, Octavia, Don Sebastian, and Dorax, recovered a portion of the old naturalness and energy; in vain Otway, who had real dramatic talent, Lee, or Southern attained a true or touching accent, so that once, in *Venice Preserved*, it was thought that the drama would be regenerated. The drama was dead, and tragedy could not replace it; or rather each one died by the other; and their union, which robbed them of strength in Dryden's time, enervated them also in the time of his successors. Literary style blunted dramatic truth; dramatic truth marred literary style; the work was neither sufficiently vivid nor sufficiently well written: the author was too little of a poet or of an orator; he had neither Shakspeare's fire of imagination nor Racine's polish and art.[1] He strayed on the boundaries of two dramas, and suited neither the half-barbarous men of art nor the well-polished men of the court. Such indeed was the audience, hesitating between two forms of thought, fed by two opposite civilisations. They had no longer the freshness of sense, the depth of impression, the bold originality and poetic folly of the cavaliers and adventurers of the Renaissance; nor will they ever acquire the aptness of speech, sweetness of manners, courtly habits, and cultivation of sentiment and thought which adorned the court of Louis XIV. They are quitting the age of solitary imagination and invention, which suits their race, for the age of reasoning and conversation, which does not suit their race: they lose their own merits, and do not acquire the merits of others. They were meagre poets and ill-bred courtiers, having lost the art of imagination and of good manners, at times dull or brutal, at times emphatic or stiff. For the production of fine poetry, race and age must concur. This race, diverging from its own age, and fettered at the outset by foreign imitation, formed its classical literature but slowly; it will only attain it after transforming its religious and political condition: the age will be that of English reason. Dryden inaugurates it by his other works, and the writers who appear in the reign of Queen Anne will give it its completion, its authority, and its splendour.

V.

But let us pause a moment longer to inquire whether, amid so many abortive and distorted branches, the old theatrical stock, abandoned by chance to itself, will not produce at some point a sound and living shoot. When a man like Dryden, so gifted, so well trained and experienced, works with a will, there is hope that he will some time succeed; and once, in part at least, Dryden did succeed. It would be treating him

[1] This impotence reminds one of Casimir Delavigne.

unjustly to be always comparing him with Shakspeare; but even on Shakspeare's ground, with the same materials, it is possible to create a fine work; only the reader must forget for a while the great inventor, the inexhaustible creator of vehement and original souls, and to consider the imitator on his own merits, without forcing an overwhelming comparison.

There is vigour and art in this tragedy of Dryden, *All for Love*. 'He has informed us, that this was the only play written to please himself.'[1] And he had really composed it learnedly, according to history and logic. And what is better still, he wrote it in a manly style. In the preface he says:

'The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it.'

He did more; he abandoned the French ornaments, and returned to national tradition:

'In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakspeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disincumbered myself from rhyme. . . . Yet, I hope, I may affirm, and without vanity, that, by imitating him, I have excelled myself throughout the play; and particularly, that I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act, to anything which I have written in this kind.'

Dryden was right; if Cleopatra is weak, if this feebleness of conception takes away the interest and mars the general effect, if the new rhetoric and the old emphasis at times suspend the emotion and destroy the likelihood, yet on the whole the drama stands erect, and what is more, moves on. The poet is skilful; he has planned, he knows how to construct a scene, to represent the internal struggle by which two passions contend for a human heart. We perceive the tragical vicissitude of the strife, the progress of a sentiment, the overthrow of obstacles, the slow growth of desire or wrath, to the very instant when the resolution, rising up of itself or seduced from without, rushes suddenly on one side. There are natural words; the poet thinks and writes too genuinely not to discover them at need. There are manly characters: he himself is a man; and beneath his courtier's pliability, his affectations as a fashionable poet, he has retained his stern and energetic character. Except for one scene of recrimination, his Octavia is a Roman matron; and when, even in Alexandria, in Cleopatra's palace, she comes to look for Antony, she does it with a simplicity and nobility, not to be surpassed. 'Cæsar's sister,' cries out Antony, accosting her. Octavia answers:

'That's unkind.
Had I been nothing more than Cæsar's sister,

[1] See the introductory notice, by Sir Walter Scott, of *All for Love* v. 290.

Know, I had still remain'd in Cæsar's camp·
But your Octavia, your much injur'd wife,
Though banish'd from your bed, driven from your house
In spite of Cæsar's sister, still is yours.
'Tis true I have a heart disdains your coldness,
And prompts me not to seek what you should offer,
But a wife's virtue still surmounts that pride.
I come to claim you as my own; to show
My duty first, to ask, nay beg, your kindness·
Your hand, my lord; 'tis mine, and I will have it.' [1]

Antony, humiliated, refuses the pardon Octavia has brought him, and tells her:

'I fear, Octavia, you have begg'd my life, . . .
Poorly and basely begg'd it of your brother.
Octavia. Poorly and basely I could never beg,
Nor could my brother grant. . . .
My hard fortune
Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes.
But the conditions I have brought are such,
You need not blush to take: I love your honour,
Because 'tis mine; it never shall be said,
Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.
Sir, you are free; free, even from her you loath:
For, though my brother bargains for your love,
Makes me the price and cement of your peace,
I have a soul like yours; I cannot take
Your love as alms, nor beg what I deserve.
I'll tell my brother we are reconciled;
He shall draw back his troops, and you shall march
To rule the east: I may be dropt at Athens;
No matter where. I never will complain,
But only keep the barren name of wife,
And rid you of the trouble.' [2]

This is lofty; this woman has a proud heart, and also a wife's heart. she knows how to give and how to bear; and better, she knows how to sacrifice herself without self-assertion, and calmly; no vulgar mind conceived such a soul as this. And Ventidius, the old general, who with her and before her, comes to rescue Antony from his illusion and servitude, is worthy to speak in behalf of honour, as she had spoken for duty. Doubtless he was a plebeian, a rude and plain-speaking soldier, with the frankness and jests of his profession, sometimes clumsy, such as a clever eunuch can dupe, 'a thick-skulled hero,' who, out of simplicity of soul, from the coarseness of his training, unsuspectingly brings Antony back to the meshes, which he seemed to be breaking through. Falling into a trap, he tells Antony that he has seen Cleopatra unfaithful with Dolabella:

[1] *All for Love*, v. 3, 1. [2] *Ibid.*

'*Antony.* My Cleopatra?
Ventidius. Your Cleopatra.
Dolabella's Cleopatra.
Every man's Cleopatra.
Antony. Thou liest.
Ventidius. I do not lie, my lord.
Is this so strange? Should mistresses be left,
And not provide against a time of change?
You know she's not much used to lonely nights.' [1]

It was just the way to make Antony jealous and bring him back furious to Cleopatra. But what a noble heart has this Ventidius, and how we catch, when he is alone with Antony, the man's voice, the deep tones which had been heard on the battlefield! He loves his general like a good dog, and asks no better than to die, so it be at his master's feet. He growls ominously on seeing him cast down crouches round him, and suddenly weeps:

'*Ventidius.* Look, Emperor, this is no common dew.
I have not wept this forty years; but now
My mother comes afresh into my eyes,
I cannot help her softness.
Antony. By Heaven, he weeps! poor, good old man, he weeps!
The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheeks.—Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death: they set my shame,
That caused them, full before me.
Ventidius. I'll do my best.
Antony. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends;
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not
For my own griefs, but thine. Nay, father!' [2]

As we hear these terrible sobs, we think of Tacitus' veterans, who, escaping from the marshes of Germany, with scarred breasts, white heads, limbs stiff with service, kissed the hands of Drusus, carried his fingers to their gums, that he might feel their worn and loosened teeth, incapable to bite the wretched bread which was given them:

'No; 'tis you dream: you sleep away your hours
In desperate sloth, miscalled philosophy.
Up, up, for honour's sake; twelve legions wait you,
And long to call you chief: By painful journies,
I led them, patient of both heat and hunger,
Down from the Parthian marshes to the Nile.
'Twill do you good to see their sun-burnt faces,
Their scarr'd cheeks, and chopt hands; there's virtue in them.
They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon trim hands can buy.' [3]

And when all is lost, when the Egyptians have turned traitors, and there is nothing left but to die well, Ventidius says:

[1] *All for Love*, 4. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 1. 1 [3] *Ibid.*

There yet remain
Three legions in the town. The last assault
Lopt off the rest: if death be your design.—
As I must wish it now,—these are sufficient
To make a heap about us of dead foes,
An honest pile for burial. . . . Chuse your death;
For, I have seen him in such various shapes,
I care not which I take: I'm only troubled.
The life I bear is worn to such a rag,
'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish, indeed,
We threw it from us with a better grace;
That, like two lions taken in the toils,
We might at least thrust out our paws, and wound
The hunters that inclose us.' [1] . . .

Antony begs him to go, but he refuses:

'*Antony.* Do not deny me twice.
Ventidius. By Heaven I will not.
Let it not be to outlive you.
Antony. Kill me first,
And then die thou; for 'tis but just to serve
Thy friend, before thyself.
Ventidius. Give me your hand.
We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, Emperor!
. . . I will not make a business of a trifle:
And yet I cannot look on you, and kill you.
Pray turn your face.
Antony. I do; strike home, be sure.
Ventidius. Home, as my sword will reach.' [2]

And with one blow he kills himself. These are the tragic, stoical manners of a military monarchy, the great profusion of murders and sacrifices wherewith the men of this overturned and shattered society killed and died. This Antony, for whom so much has been done, is not undeserving of their love: he has been one of Cæsar's heroes, the first soldier of the van; kindness and generosity breathe from him to the last; if he is weak against a woman, he is strong against men; he has the muscles and heart, the wrath and passions of a soldier; it is this heat of blood, this too quick sentiment of honour, which has caused his ruin; he cannot forgive his own crime; he possesses not that lofty genius which, dwelling in a region superior to ordinary rules, emancipates a man from hesitation, from discouragement and remorse; he is only a soldier, he cannot forget that he has not executed the orders given to him:

'*Ventidius.* Emperor!
Antony. Emperor? Why, that's the style of victory
The conquering soldier, red with unfelt wounds,
Salutes his general so: but never more
Shall that sound reach my ears.

[1] *All for Love*, 5. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

Ventidius. I warrant you.
Antony. Actium, Actium! Oh——
Ventidius. It sits too near you.
Antony. Here, here it lies; a lump of lead by day;
And in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams. . . .
Ventidius. That's my royal master;
And, shall we fight?
Antony. I warrant thee, old soldier.
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron;
And at the head of our old troops, that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud, "Come, follow me."'[1]

He fancies himself on the battlefield, and already passion carries him away. Such a man is not one to govern men; we cannot master fortune until we have mastered ourselves; this man is only made to belie and destroy himself, and to be veered round alternately by every passion. As soon as he believes Cleopatra faithful, honour, reputation, empires, everything vanishes:

'*Ventidius.* And what's this toy,
In balance with your fortune, honour, fame?
Antony. What is't, Ventidius? it outweighs them all.
Why, we have more than conquer'd Cæsar now.
My queen's not only innocent, but loves me. . . .
Down on thy knees, blasphemer as thou art,
And ask forgiveness of wrong'd innocence!
Ventidius. I'll rather die than take it. Will you go?
Antony. Go! Whither? Go from all that's excellent!
. . . Give, you gods,
Give to your boy, your Cæsar,
This rattle of a globe to play withal,
This gewgaw world; and put him cheaply off:
I'll not be pleased with less than Cleopatra.'[2]

Dejection follows excess; these souls are only tempered against fear, their courage is but that of the bull and the lion; to be fully themselves, they need bodily action, visible danger; their temperament sustains them; before great moral sufferings they give way. When Antony thinks himself deceived, he despairs, and has nothing left but to die:

'Let him (Cæsar) walk
Alone upon't. I'm weary of my part.
My torch is out; and the world stands before me,
Like a black desert at the approach of night;
I'll lay me down, and stray no farther on.'[3]

Such verses remind us of Othello's gloomy dreams, of Macbeth, of Hamlet's even; beyond the pile of swelling tirades and characters of painted cardboard, it is as though the poet had touched the ancient drama, and brought its emotion away with him.

[1] *All for Love*, 1. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 2. 1, end. [3] *Ibid.* 5. 1.

By his side another also has felt it, a young man, a poor adventurer, by turns a student, actor, officer, always wild and always poor, who lived madly and sadly in excess and misery, like the old dramatists, with their inspiration, their fire, and who died at the age of thirty-four, according to some of a fever caused by fatigue, according to others of a prolonged fast, at the end of which he swallowed too quickly a morsel of bread bestowed on him in charity. Through the pompous cloak of the new rhetoric, Thomas Otway now and then reached the passions of the other age. It is plain that the times he lived in marred him, that the oratorical style, the literary phrases, the classical declamation, the well-poised antitheses, buzzed about him, and drowned his note in their sustained and monotonous hum. Had he but been born a hundred years earlier! In his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* we encounter the sombre imaginations of Webster, Ford, and Shakspeare, their gloomy idea of life, their atrocities, murders, pictures of irresistible passions, which riot blindly like a herd of savage beasts, and make a chaos of the battlefield, with their yells and tumult, leaving behind them but devastation and heaps of dead. Like Shakspeare, his events are human transports and furies—a brother violating his brother's wife, a husband perjuring himself for his wife; Polydore, Chamont, Jaffier, weak and violent souls, the sport of chance, the prey of temptation, with whom transport or crime, like poison poured into the veins, gradually ascends, envenoms the whole man, is spread on all whom he touches, and contorts and casts them down together in a convulsive delirium. Like Shakspeare, he has found poignant and living words,[1] which lay bare the depths of humanity, the strange noise of a machine which is getting out of order, the tension of the will stretched to breaking-point,[2] the simplicity of real sacrifice, the humility of exasperated and craving passion, which longs to the end and against all hope for its fuel and its gratification.[3] Like Shakspeare, he has conceived genuine women,[4]—

[1] Monimia says, in the *Orphan* (5, end), when dying, 'How my head swims 'Tis very dark; good night.'

[2] See the death of Pierre and Jaffier in *Venice Preserved* (5, last scene) Pierre stabbed once, bursts into a laugh.

[3] '*Jaffier*. Oh, that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friends, my oath!
This, and no more. (*Kisses her.*)
Belvidera. Another, sure another
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of;
I'll giv't him truly.'—*Venice Preserved*, 5. 1.
There is jealousy in this last word.

[4] 'Oh, thou art tender all.
Gentle and kind, as sympathizing nature,
Dove-like, soft and kind. . . .
I'll ever live your most obedient wife,
Nor ever any privilege pretend
Beyond your will.'—*Orphan*, 4, 1.

Monimia, above all Belvidera, who, like Imogen, has given herself wholly, and is lost as in an abyss of adoration for him whom she has chosen, who can but love, obey, weep, suffer, and who dies like a flower plucked from the stalk, when her arms are torn from the neck around which she has locked them. Like Shakspeare again, he has found, at least once, the large bitter buffoonery, the crude sentiment of human baseness; and he has introduced into his most painful tragedy, an obscene caricature, an old senator, who unbends from his official gravity in order to play at his mistress' house the clown or the valet. How bitter! how true was his conception, in making the busy man eager to leave his robes and his ceremonies! how ready the man is to abase himself, when, escaped from his part, he comes to his real self! how the ape and the dog crop out of him! The senator Antonio comes to his Aquilina, who insults him; he is amused; hard words relieve other compliments; he minces, runs into a falsetto like a zany at a country fair:

'*Antonio.* Nacky, Nacky, Nacky,—how dost do, Nacky? Hurry, durry. I am come, little Nacky. Past eleven o'clock, a late hour; time in all conscience to go to bed, Nacky.—Nacky did I say? Ay, Nacky, Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina; Aquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Nacky, queen Nacky.—Come, let's to bed.—You fubbs, you pug you—You little puss.—Purree tuzzy—I am a senator.

Aquilina. You are a fool, I am sure.

Antonio. May be so too, sweet-heart. Never the worse senator for all that. Come, Nacky, Nacky; let's have a game at romp, Nacky! . . . You won't sit down? Then look you now; suppose me a bull, a Basan-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus up I get, and with my brows thus bent—I broo; I say I broo, I broo, I broo. You won't sit down, will you—I broo. . . . Now, I'll be a senator again, and thy lover, little Nicky, Nacky. Ah, toad, toad, toad, toad, spit in my face a little, Nacky; spit in my face, pry'thee, spit in my face, never so little; spit but a little bit,—spit, spit, spit, spit when you are bid, I say; do pry'thee, spit.—Now, now spit. What, you won't spit, will you? Then I'll be a dog.

Aquilina. A dog, my lord!

Antonio. Ay, a dog, and I'll give thee this t'other purse to let me be a dog—and to use me like a dog a little. Hurry durry, I will—here 'tis. (*Gives the purse.*) . . . Now bough waugh waugh, bough, waugh.

Aquilina. Hold, hold, sir. If curs bite, they must be kicked, sir. Do you see, kicked thus?

Antonio. Ay, with all my heart. Do, kick, kick on, now I am under the table, kick again,—kick harder—harder yet—bough, waugh, waugh, bough.—Odd, I'll have a snap at thy shins.—Bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough—odd, she kicks bravely.'[1]

At last she takes a whip, thrashes him soundly, and turns him out of the house. He will return, you may be sure; it has been a pleasant night for him; he rubs his back, but he was amused. In fine, he was but a clown who had missed his vocation, whom chance has given an

[1] *Venice Preserved*, 3. 1. Antonio is meant as a copy of the 'celebrated Earl of Shaftesbury, the lewdness of whose latter years,' says Mr. Thornton in his edition of Otway's works, 3 vols. 1815, 'was a subject of general notoriety.'—TR.

embroidered silk gown, and who turns out at so much an hour political harlequinades. He feels more natural, more at his ease, playing Punch than aping a statesman.

These are but gleams: for the most part Otway is a poet of his time, dull and forced in colour; buried, like the rest, in the heavy, grey, clouded atmosphere, half English, half French, in which the bright lights brought over from France, are snuffed out by the insular fogs. He is a man of his time; like the rest, he writes obscene comedies, *The Soldier's Fortune*, *The Atheist*, *Friendship in Fashion*. He depicts coarse and vicious cavaliers, rogues on principle, as harsh and corrupt as those of Wycherley: Beaugard, who vaunts and practises the maxims of Hobbes; the father, an old, corrupt rascal, who brags of his morality, and whom his son coldly sends to the dogs with a bag of crowns: Sir Jolly Jumble, a kind of base Falstaff, a pander by profession, whom the courtesans call 'papa, daddy,' who, 'if he sits but at the table with one, he'll be making nasty figures in the napkins:'[1] Sir Davy Dunce, a disgusting animal, who 'has such a breath, one kiss of him were enough to cure the fits of the mother; 'tis worse than assafœtida. Clean linen, he says, is unwholesome . . .; he is continually eating of garlic, and chewing tobacco:'[2] Polydore, who, enamoured of his father's ward, tries to force her in the first scene, envies the brutes, and makes up his mind to imitate them on the next occasion.[3] Even his heroines he defiles.[4] Truly this society sickens us. They thought

[1] *The Soldier's Fortune*, 1. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] 'Who'd be that sordid foolish thing called man,
To cringe thus, fawn, and flatter for a pleasure,
Which beasts enjoy so very much above him?
The lusty bull ranges thro' all the field,
And from the herd singling his female out,
Enjoys her, and abandons her at will.
It shall be so, I'll yet possess my love,
Wait on and watch her loose unguarded hours:
Then, when her roving thoughts have been abroad,
And brought in wanton wishes to her heart;
I' th' very minute when her virtue nods,
I'll rush upon her in a storm of love,
Beat down her guard of honour all before me,
Surfeit on joys, till ev'n desires grow sick;
Then by long absence liberty regain,
And quite forget the pleasure and the pain.'—*The Orphan* 1. 1
It is impossible to see together more moral roguery and literary correctness.

[4] '*Page* (to Monimia). In the morning when you call me to you,
And by your bed I stand and tell you stories,
I am ashamed to see your swelling breasts;
It makes me blush, they are so very white.
Monimia. Oh men, for flatt'ry and deceit renown'd!'
—*The Orphan*, 1. 1

to cover all their filth with fine correct metaphors, neatly ended poetical periods, a garment of harmonious phrases and noble expressions. They thought to equal Racine by counterfeiting his style. They did not know that in this style visible elegance conceals an admirable justness; that if it is a masterpiece of art, it is also a picture of manners; that the most refined and accomplished in society alone could speak and understand it; that it paints a civilisation, as Shakspeare's does; that each of these lines, which appear so restricted, has its inflection and artifice; that all passions, and every shade of passion, are expressed in them,—not, it is true, wild and entire, as in Shakspeare, but pared down and refined by courtly life; that this is a spectacle as unique as the other; that nature perfectly polished is as complex and as difficult to understand as nature perfectly intact; that as for them, they were as far below the one as above the other; and that, in short, their characters are as much like Racine's as the porter of Mons. de Beauvilliers or the cook of Madame de Sévigné are like Madame de Sévigné or Mons. de Beauvilliers.[1]

VI.

Let us then leave this drama in the obscurity which it deserves, and seek elsewhere, in studied writings, for a happier employment of a fuller talent.

This is the true domain of Dryden and of classical reason:[2] pamphlets and dissertations in verse, letters, satires, translations and imitations, this is the field on which logical faculties and the art of writing find their best occupation. Before descending into it, and observing their work, it will be as well to study more closely the man who so wielded them.

His was a singularly solid and judicious mind, an excellent reasoner, accustomed to discriminate his ideas, armed with good long-meditated proofs, strong in discussion, asserting principles, establishing his subdivisions, citing authorities, drawing inferences; so that, if we read his prefaces without reading his dramas, we might take him for one of the masters of the dramatic art. He naturally attains a definite prose style; his ideas are unfolded with breadth and clearness; his style is well moulded, exact and simple, free from the affectations and ornaments with which Pope afterwards burdened his own; his expression is, like that of Corneille, ample and periodic, by virtue simply of the internal argumentativeness which unfolds and sustains it. We can see

[1] Burns said, after his arrival in Edinburgh, 'Between the man of rustic life and the polite world, I observed little difference. . . . But a refined and accomplished woman was a being altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea.'—(*Burns' Works*, ed. Cunningham, 1832, 8 vols., i. 207.)

[2] Dryden says in his *Essay on Satire*, xiii 30, 'the stage to which my genius never much inclined me.

that he thinks, and that on his own behalf; that he combines and verifies his thoughts; that beyond all this, he naturally has a just perception, and that with his method he has good sense. He has the tastes and the weaknesses which suit his cast of intellect. He holds in the highest estimation 'the admirable Boileau, whose numbers are excellent, whose expressions are noble, whose thoughts are just, whose language is pure, whose satire is pointed, and whose sense is close. What he borrows from the ancients, he repays with usury of his own, in coin as good, and almost as universally valuable.'[1] He has the stiffness of the logician poets, too strict and argumentative, blaming Ariosto, 'who neither designed justly, nor observed any unity of action, or compass of time, or moderation in the vastness of his draught; his style is luxurious, without majesty or decency, and his adventures without the compass of nature and possibility.'[2] He understands delicacy no better than fancy. Speaking of Horace, he finds that 'his wit is faint and his salt almost insipid. Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear.'[3] For the same reason he depreciates the French style: 'Their language is not strung with sinews, like our English; it has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk and body of a mastiff. . . . They have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigour is that of ours.'[4] Two or three such words depict a man; Dryden has just affirmed, unwittingly, the measure and quality of his mind.

This mind, as we may imagine, is heavy, and especially in flattery. Flattery is the chief art in a monarchical age. Dryden is hardly skilful in it, any more than his contemporaries. Across the Channel, at the same epoch, they praised just as much, but without cringing too low, because praise was decked out; now disguised or relieved by charm of style; now looking as if men took to it as to a fashion. Thus delicately rendered, people are able to digest it. But here, far from the fine aristocratic kitchen, it weighs like an undigested mass upon the stomach. I have related how Lord Clarendon, hearing that his daughter had just married the Duke of York in secret, begged the king to have her instantly beheaded;[5] how the Commons, composed for the most part of Presbyterians, declared themselves and the English people rebels, worthy of the punishment of death, and went moreover to cast themselves at the king's feet, with contrite air to beg him to pardon the House and the nation.[6] Dryden is no more delicate than statesmen and legislators. His dedications are as a rule nauseous. He says to the Duchess of Monmouth:

'To receive the blessings and prayers of mankind, you need only be seen together. We are ready to conclude, that you are a pair of angels sent below to

[1] *Essay on Satire*, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, xiii. 16. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* 84. [4] Dedication of the *Æneïs*, xiv. 201.
[5] See vol. i. 466. [6] See vol. i. 467.

make virtue amiable in your persons, or to sit to poets when they would pleasantly instruct the age, by drawing goodness in the most perfect and alluring shape of nature. . . . No part of Europe can afford a parallel to your noble Lord in masculine beauty, and in goodliness of shape.'[1]

Elsewhere he says to the Duke of Monmouth:

'You have all the advantages of mind and body, and an illustrious birth, conspiring to render you an extraordinary person. The Achilles and the Rinaldo are present in you, even above their originals; you only want a Homer or a Tasso to make you equal to them. Youth, beauty, and courage (all which you possess in the height of their perfection) are the most desirable gifts of Heaven.'[2]

His Grace did not frown nor hold his nose, and his Grace was right.[3] Another author, Mrs. Aphra Behn, burned a still more ill-savoured incense under the nose of Nell Gwynne: people's nerves were strong in those days, and they breathed freely where others would be suffocated. The Earl of Dorset having written some little songs and satires, Dryden swears that in his way he equalled Shakspeare, and surpassed all the ancients. And these barefaced panegyrics go on imperturbably for a score of pages, the author alternately passing in review the various virtues of his great man, always finding that the last is the finest;[4] after which he receives by way of recompense a purse of gold. Observe that in this Dryden is not more a flunkey than the others. The corporation of Hull, harangued one day by the Duke of Monmouth, made him a present of six broad pieces, which were presented to Monmouth by Marvell, the member for Hull.[5] Modern scruples were not yet born. I can believe that Dryden, with all his prostrations, lacked spirit more than honour.

A second talent, perhaps the first in carnival time, is the art of saying pretty things, and the Restoration was a carnival, about as delicate as a bargee's ball. There are strange songs and more than adventurous prologues in Dryden's plays. His *Marriage à la Mode* opens with these verses sung by a married woman:

'Why should a foolish marriage vow,
Which long ago was made,
Oblige us to each other now,
When passion is decay'd?

[1] Dedication of *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 261.

[2] Dedication of *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 347.

[3] He also says in the same epistle dedicatory: 'All men will join me in the adoration which I pay you.' To the Earl of Rochester he writes in a letter (xviii. 90): 'I find it is not for me to contend any way with your Lordship, who can write better on the meanest subject than I can on the best. . . . You are above any incense I can give you.' In his dedication of the *Fables* (xi. 195) he compares the Duke of Ormond to Joseph, Ulysses, Lucullus, etc. In his fourth poetical epistle (xi. 20) he compares Lady Castlemaine to Cato.

[4] Dedication of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 286.

[5] See Andrew Marvell's Works, i. 210.

We lov'd, and we lov'd as long as we cou'd,
'Till our love was lov'd out in us both.
But our marriage is dead when the pleasure is fled;
'Twas pleasure first made it an oath.'

The reader may read the rest for himself in Dryden's plays; it cannot be quoted. Besides, Dryden does not succeed well; his mind is on too solid a basis; his mood is too serious, even reserved, taciturn. As Sir Walter Scott well said, 'his indelicacy was like the forced impudence of a bashful man.'[1] He wished to wear the fine exterior of a Sedley or a Rochester, made himself petulant of set purpose, and squatted clumsily in the filth in which others simply sported. Nothing is more nauseous than studied lewdness, and Dryden studies everything, even pleasantness and politeness. He wrote to Dennis, who had praised him:

'They (the commendations) are no more mine when I receive them than the light of the moon can be allowed to be her own, who shines but by the reflexion of her brother.'[2]

He wrote to his cousin, in a diverting narration, these details of a fat woman, with whom he had travelled:

'Her weight made the horses travel very heavily; but, to give them a breathing time, she would often stop us, . . . and tell us we were all flesh and blood.'[3]

It seems that these pretty things would then amuse a lady. His letters are made up of heavy official civilities, vigorously hewn compliments, mathematical salutes; his badinage is a dissertation, he props up his trifles with periods. I have found in him beautiful pieces, but never pleasing ones; he cannot even argue with taste. The characters in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* think themselves still at school, learnedly quote Paterculus, and in Latin too, opposing the definition of the other side, and observing 'that it was only *à genere et fine*, and so not altogether perfect.'[4] In one of his prefaces he says in a professorial tone:

'It is charged upon me that I make debauched persons my protagonists, or the chief persons of the drama; and that I make them happy in the conclusion of my play; against the law of comedy, which is to reward virtue, and punish vice.'[5]

Elsewhere he declares: 'It is not that I would explode the use of metaphors from passion, for Longinus thinks them necessary to raise it.' His great essay upon satire swarms with useless or long protracted passages, with the inquiries and comparisons of a commentator. He cannot get rid of the scholar, the logician, the rhetorician, and show the natural man.

But the man of spirit was often manifest; in spite of several falls

[1] Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 447.
[2] Letter 2, 'to Mr. John Dennis,' xviii. 114.
[3] Letter 29, 'to Mrs. Steward,' xviii. 144.
[4] *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 302.
[5] Preface to *An Evening's Love*, iii. 225.

and many slips, he shows a mind constantly upright, bending rather from conventionality than from nature, with a dash and afflatus, occupied with grave thoughts, and subjecting his conduct to his convictions. He was converted loyally and by conviction to the Roman Catholic creed, persevered in it after the fall of James II., lost his post of historiographer and poet-laureate, and though poor, burdened with a family, and infirm, refused to dedicate his *Virgil* to King William. He wrote to his sons:

'Dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent: yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature. . . . In the mean time, I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake. . . . You know the profits (of *Virgil*) might have been more; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them; but I can never repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer.'[1]

One of his sons having been expelled from school, he wrote to the master, Dr. Busby, his own old teacher, with extreme gravity and nobleness, asking without humiliation, disagreeing without giving offence, in a sustained and proud style, which is calculated to please, seeking again his favour, if not as a debt to the father, at least as a gift to the son, and concluding, 'I have done something, so far to conquer my own spirit as to ask it.' He was a good father to his children, as well as liberal, and sometimes even generous, to the tenant of his little estate.[2] He says:

'More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living. . . . I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, . . . and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet.'[3]

Insulted by Collier as a corrupter of morals, he endured this coarse reproof, and nobly confessed the faults of his youth:

'I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance.'[4]

There is some wit in what follows:

'He (Collier) is too much given to horseplay in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say "the zeal of God's house has eaten him up," but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility.'[5]

Such a repentance raises a man; to humble oneself thus, one must be a great man. He was so in mind and in heart, full of solid arguments and individual opinions, above the petty mannerism of rhetoric and

[1] Letter 23. 'to his sons at Rome,' xviii. 133.

[2] Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 449.

[3] *Essay on Satire*, xiii. 80.

[4] Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 238.

[5] *Ibid.*

affectations of style, a master of verse, a slave to his idea, with that abundance of thoughts which is the sign of true genius:

'Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to chuse or to reject, to run them into verses, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me.'[1]

With these powers he entered upon his second career; the English constitution and genius opened it to him.

VII.

'A man,' says La Bruyère, 'born a Frenchman and a Christian finds himself constrained in satire; great subjects are forbidden to him; he essays them sometimes, and then turns aside to small things, which he elevates by the beauty of his genius and his style.' It was not so in England. Great subjects were given up to vehement discussion; politics and religion, like two arenas, invited to boldness and to battle, every talent and every passion. The king, at first popular, had roused opposition by his vices and errors, and bent before public discontent as before the intrigue of parties. It was known that he had sold the interests of England to France; it was believed that he would deliver up the consciences of Protestants to the Papists. The lies of Oates, the murder of the magistrate Godfrey, his corpse solemnly paraded in the streets of London, had inflamed the imagination and prejudices of the people; the judges, blind or intimidated, sent innocent Roman Catholics to the scaffold, and the mob received with insults and curses their protestations of innocence. The king's brother had been excluded from his offices, it was endeavoured to exclude him from the throne. The pulpit, the theatres, the press, the hustings, resounded with discussions and recriminations. The names of Whigs and Tories arose, and the deepest debates of political philosophy were carried on, nursed by sentiments of present and practical interests, embittered by the rancour of old as well as of freshly roused passions. Dryden plunged in; and his poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* was a political pamphlet. 'They who can criticise so weakly,' he says in the preface, 'as to imagine that I have done my worst, may be convinced at their own cost that I can write severely with more ease than I can gently.' A biblical allegory, suited to the taste of the time, hardly concealed the names, and did not hide the men. He describes the tranquil old age and incontestable right of King David;[2] the charm, pliant humour, popularity of his natural son Absalom;[3] the genius and treachery of Achitophel,[4] who stirs up the

[1] Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 209.

[2] Charles II. [3] The Duke of Monmouth.

[4] The Earl of Shaftesbury:

Of these the false Achitophel was first,
A name to all succeeding ages curst:

son against the father, unites the clashing ambitions, and reanimates the conquered factions. There is hardly any wit here; there is no time to be witty in such contests; think of the roused people who listened, men in prison or exile who heard him; fortune, liberty, life was at stake. The thing is to strike the nail on the head and hard, not gracefully. The public must recognise the characters, shout their names as they recognise the portraits, applaud the attacks which are made upon them, rail at them, hurl them from the high rank which they covet. Dryden passes them all in review:

'In the first rank of these did Zimri[1] stand,
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes:
So over-violent, or over-civil,
That every man with him was God or devil.

For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit—
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity,
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
Punish a body which he could not please,
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
And all to leave what with his toil he won,
To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,
Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
In friendship false, implacable in hate,
Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.'

[1] The Duke of Buckingham.

In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laugh'd himself from Court; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief:
For spite of him the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel;
Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left. . . .
Shimei,[1] whose youth did early promise bring
Of zeal to God and hatred to his King;
Did wisely from expensive sins refrain
And never broke the Sabbath but for gain:
Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,
Or curse, unless against the government.'

Against these attacks their chief Shaftesbury made a stand: when accused of high treason he was declared guiltless by the grand jury, in spite of all the efforts of the court, amidst the applause of a vast multitude; and his partisans caused a medal to be struck, bearing his face, and boldly showing on the reverse the Tower obscured by a cloud. Dryden replied by his poem of the *Medal*, and the violent diatribe overwhelmed the open provocation:

'Oh, could the style that copied every grace
And plow'd such furrows for an eunuch face,
Could it have formed his ever-changing will,
The various piece had tired the graver's skill!
A martial hero first, with early care,
Blown, like a pigmy by the winds, to war;
A beardless chief, a rebel ere a man,
So young his hatred to his Prince began.
Next this, (how wildly will ambition steer!)
A vermin wriggling in the usurper's ear;
Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,
He cast himself into the saint-like mould,
Groaned, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,
The loudest bag-pipe of the squeaking train.'

The same bitterness envenomed religious controversy. Disputes on dogma, for a moment cast into the shade by debauched and sceptical manners, had broken out again, inflamed by the bigoted Catholicism of the prince, and by the just fears of the nation. The poet who in *Religio Laici* was still an Anglican, though lukewarm and hesitating, drawn on gradually by his absolutist inclinations, had become a convert to Romanism, and in his poem of *The Hind and the Panther* fought for his new creed. 'The nation,' he says in the preface, 'is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair war or even so much as fair quarter from a reader of the opposite party.' And then, making use

[1] Slingsby Bethel.

of the mediæval allegories, he represents all the heretical sects as beasts of prey, worrying a white hind of heavenly origin; he spares neither coarse comparisons, nor gross sarcasms, nor open objurgations. The argument is close and theological throughout. His hearers were not wits, who cared to see how a dry subject could be adorned, theologians accidentally and for a moment, with mistrust and reserve, like Boileau in his *Amour de Dieu*. They were oppressed men, barely recovered from a secular persecution, attached to their faith by their sufferings, ill at ease under the visible menaces and ominous hatred of their restrained foes. Their poet must be a dialectician and a schoolman; he needs all the sternness of logic; he is immeshed in it, like a recent convert, saturated with the proofs which have separated him from the national faith, and which support him against public reprobation, fertile in distinctions, putting his finger on the weaknesses of an argument, subdividing replies, bringing back his adversary to the question, thorny and unpleasing to a modern reader, but the more praised and loved in his own time. In all English minds there is a basis of gravity and vehemence; hate rises tragic, with a gloomy outbreak, like the breakers in the North Sea. In the midst of his public strife Dryden attacks a private enemy, Shadwell, and overwhelms him with immortal scorn.[1] A great epic style and solemn rhyme gave weight to his sarcasm, and the unlucky rhymester was drawn in a ridiculous triumph on the poetic car whereon the muse sets the heroes and the gods. Dryden represented the Irishman Mac Flecknoe, an old king of folly, deliberating on the choice of a worthy successor, and choosing Shadwell as an heir to his gabble, a propagator of nonsense, a boastful conqueror of common sense. From all sides, through the streets littered with paper, the nations assembled to look upon the young hero, standing near the throne of his father, his brow surrounded with fogs, the vacant smile of satisfied imbecility floating over his countenance:

> 'The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
> High on a throne of his own labors rear'd.
> At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
> Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state;
> His brows thick fogs instead of glories grace,
> And lambent dulness play'd around his face.
> As Hannibal did to the altars come,
> Sworn by his sire, a mortal foe to Rome;
> So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
> That he, till death, true dulness would maintain;
> And, in his father's right and realm's defence,
> Ne'er to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.
> The king himself the sacred unction made,
> As king by office and as priest by trade.
> In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
> He placed a mighty mug of potent ale.'

[1] Mac Flecknoe.

His father blesses him :

'"Heavens bless my son! from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father's be his throne;
Beyond Love's Kingdom let him stretch his pen!
He paused, and all the people cried Amen.
Then thus continued he: "My son, advance
Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let others teach, learn thou from me,
Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit. . . .
Let them be all by thy own model made
Of dulness and desire no foreign aid,
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own:
Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee and differing but in name. . . .
Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep;
Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.
With whate'er gall thou setst thyself to write,
Thy inoffensive satires never bite;
In thy felonious heart though venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display, and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways;
Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute."
He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,
And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,
Borne upward by a subterranean wind.
The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
With double portion of his father's art.'

Thus the insulting masquerade goes on, not studied and polished like Boileau's *Lutrin*, but rude and pompous, inspired by a coarse and poetical afflatus, as you may see a great ship enter the muddy Thames, with spread canvas, cleaving the waters.

VIII.

In these three poems, the art of writing, the mark and the source of classical literature, appeared for the first time. A new spirit was born and renewed this art, like everything else; thenceforth, and for a cen-

tury to come, ideas sprang up and fell into their place after another law than that which had hitherto shaped them. Under Spenser and Shakspeare, living words, like cries or music, betrayed the internal imagination which gave them forth. A kind of vision possessed the artist; landscapes and events were unfolded in his mind as in nature; he concentrated in a glance all the details and all the forces which make up a being, and this image acted and was developed within him like the external object; he imitated his characters; he heard their words; he found it easier to represent them with every pulsation than to relate or explain their feelings; he did not judge, he saw; he was an involuntary actor and mimic; drama was his natural work, because in it the characters speak, and not the author. Then this complex and imitative conception changes colour and is decomposed: man sees things no more at a glance, but in detail; he walks leisurely round them, turning his light upon all their parts in succession. The fire which revealed them by a single illumination is extinguished; he observes qualities, marks aspects, classifies groups of actions, judges and reasons. Words, before animated, and as it were swelling with sap, are withered and dried; they become abstractions; they cease to produce in him figures and landscapes; they only set in motion the relics of enfeebled passions; they barely shed a few flickering beams on the uniform texture of his dulled conception; they become exact, almost scientific, like numbers, and like numbers they are arranged in a series, allied by proportions,—the first, more simple, leading up to the next, more composite,—all in the same order, so that the mind which enters upon a track, finds it level, and is never obliged to quit it. Thenceforth a new career is opened; man has the whole world resubjected to his thought; the change in his thoughts has changed all the aspects, and everything assumes a new form in his metamorphosed mind. His task is to explain and to prove; this, in short, is the classical style, and this is the style of Dryden.

He develops, defines, concludes; he declares his thought, then takes it up again, that his reader may receive it prepared, and having received, may retain it. He bounds it with exact terms justified by the dictionary, with simple constructions justified by grammar, that the reader may have at every step a method of verification and a source of clearness. He contrasts ideas with ideas, phrases with phrases, that the reader, guided by the contrast, may not deviate from the route marked out for him. You may imagine the possible beauty of such a work. This poesy is but a stronger prose. Closer ideas, more marked contrasts, bolder images, only add weight to the argument. Metre and rhyme transform the judgments into sentences. The mind, held on the stretch by the rhythm, studies itself more, and by means of reflection arrives at a noble conclusion. The judgments are embossed in abbreviative images, or symmetrical lines, which give them the solidity and popular form of a dogma. General truths acquire the definite form

which transmits them to posterity, and propagates them in the human race. Such is the merit of these poems; they please by their good expressions.[1] In a full and solid web stand out cleverly knotted or sparkling threads. Here Dryden has gathered in one line a long argument; there a happy metaphor has opened up a new perspective under the principal idea;[2] further on, two similar words, united together, have struck the mind with an unforeseen and cogent proof;[3] elsewhere a hidden comparison has thrown a tinge of glory or shame on the person who least expected it. These are all artifices or successes of a calculated style, which chains the attention, and leaves the mind persuaded or convinced.

IX.

In truth, there is scarcely any other literary merit. If Dryden is a skilled politician, a trained controversialist, well armed with arguments, knowing all the ins and outs of discussion, versed in the history of men and parties, this pamphleteering aptitude, practical and English, confines him to the low region of everyday and personal combats, far from the lofty philosophy and speculative freedom which give endurance and greatness to the classical style of his French contemporaries. In this age, in England, all discussion was fundamentally narrow. Except the terrible Hobbes, they all lack grand originality. Dryden, like the rest, is confined to the arguments and insults of sect and fashion. Their ideas were as small as their hatred was strong; no general doctrine opened up beyond the tumult of the strife a poetical vista; texts, traditions, a sad train of rigid reasoning, such were their arms; prejudice and passion swayed both parties. This is why the subject-matter fell below the art of writing. Dryden had no personal philosophy to de-

[1] 'Strong were our sires, and as they fought they writ,
Conquering with force of arms and dint of wit:
Theirs was the giant race, before the flood.
And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire stood.
Like Janus, he the stubborn soil manured,
With rules of husbandry the rankness cured;
Tamed us to manners, when the stage was rude,
And boisterous English wit with art endued. . . .
But what we gain'd in skill we lost in strength,
Our builders were with want of genius curst;
The second temple was not like the first.'
Epistle 12 *to Congreve*, xi. 59.

[2] 'Held up the buckler of the people's cause
Against the crown, and skulk'd against the laws. . .
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet, sprung from high, is of celestial seed!'
Absalom and Achitophel, Part i.

[3] 'Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
Turn rebel, and run popularly mad?'

velop; he does but versify themes given to him by others. In this sterility art soon is reduced to the clothing of foreign ideas, and the writer becomes an antiquarian or a translator. In fact, the greatest part of Dryden's poems are imitations, adaptations, or copies. He translated Persius, Virgil, part of Horace, Theocritus, Juvenal, Lucretius, and Homer, and put into modern English several tales of Boccacio and Chaucer. These translations then appeared to be as great works as original compositions. When he took the *Æneid* in hand, the nation, as Johnson tells us, appeared to think its honour interested in the issue. Addison furnished him with the arguments of every book, and an essay on the *Georgics;* others supplied him with editions and notes; great lords vied with one another in offering him hospitality; subscriptions flowed in. They said that the English Virgil was to give England the Virgil of Rome. This work was long considered his highest glory. Even so at Rome, under Cicero, in the early dearth of national poetry, the translators of Greek works were as highly praised as the original authors.

This sterility of invention alters or depresses the taste. For taste is an instinctive system, and leads us by internal maxims, which we ignore. The mind, guided by it, perceives connections, shuns discordances, enjoys or suffers, chooses or rejects, according to general conceptions which master it, but are not visible. These removed, we see the tact, which they engendered, disappear; the writer is clumsy, because philosophy fails him. Such is the imperfection of the stories handled by Dryden, from Boccacio and Chaucer. Dryden does not see that fairy tales or tales of chivalry only suit a poetry in its infancy; that ingenious subjects require an artless style; that the talk of Renard and Chanticleer, the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, the transformations, tournaments, apparitions, need the astonished carelessness and the graceful gossip of old Chaucer. Vigorous periods, reflective antitheses, here oppress these amiable ghosts; classical phrases embarrass them in their too stringent embrace; they are lost to our sight; to find them again, we must go to their first parent, quit the too harsh light of a learned and manly age; we cannot pursue them fairly except in their first style in the dawn of credulous thought, under the mist which plays about their vague forms, with all the blushes and smile of morning. Moreover, when Dryden comes on the scene, he crushes the delicacies of his master, hauling in tirades or reasonings, blotting out sincere and self-abandoning tenderness. What a difference between his account of Arcite's death and Chaucer's! How wretched are all his fine words, his gallantry, his symmetrical phrases, his cold regrets, compared to the cries of sorrow, the true outpouring, the deep love in Chaucer! But the worst fault is that almost everywhere he is a copyist, and retains the faults like a literal translator, with eyes glued on the work, powerless to comprehend and recast it, more a rhymester than a poet. When La Fontaine put Æsop or Boccacio into

verse, he breathed a new spirit into them; he took their matter only: the new soul, which constitutes the value of his work, is his, and only his; and this soul befits the work. In place of the Ciceronian periods of Boccacio, we find slim, little lines, full of delicate raillery, dainty voluptuousness, feigned frankness, which relish the forbidden fruit because it is fruit, and because it is forbidden. The tragic departs, the relics of the middle-ages are a thousand leagues away; there remains nothing but the jeering gaiety, Gallic and racy, as of a critic and an epicurean. In Dryden, incongruities abound; and our author is so little shocked by them, that he imports them elsewhere, in his theological poems, representing the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, as a hind, and the heresies by various animals, who dispute at as great length and as learnedly as Oxford graduates.[1] I like him no better in his Epistles; as a rule, they are but flatteries, almost always awkward, often mythological, interspersed with somewhat vulgar sentences. 'I have studied Horace,' he says,[2] 'and hope the style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here.' Do not imagine it to be true. Horace's Epistles, though in verse, are genuine letters, brisk, unequal in movement, always unstudied, natural. Nothing is further from Dryden than this original and sociable spirit, philosophical and lewd,[3] the most refined and the most nervous of epicureans, a kinsman (at eighteen centuries' distance) of Alfred de Musset and Voltaire. Like Horace, an author must be a thinker and a man of the world to write agreeable morality, and Dryden was no more than his contemporaries a thinker or a man of the world.

But other no less English characteristics sustain him. Suddenly, in the midst of the yawns which these Epistles excited, our eyes are arrested. A true accent, new ideas, are brought out. Dryden, writing to his cousin, a country gentleman, has lighted on an English original subject. He depicts the life of a rural squire, the reference of his neighbours, who shuns lawsuits and town doctors, who keeps himself in health by hunting and exercise. Here is his portrait:

> 'How bless'd is he, who leads a country life,
> Unvex'd with anxious cares, and void of strife! . . .
> With crowds attended of your ancient race,
> You seek the champaign sports, or sylvan chase;
> With well-breathed beagles you surround the wood,
> Even then industrious of the common good;
> And often have you brought the wily fox
> To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks;
> Chased even amid the folds, and made to bleed,
> Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.

[1] Though Huguenots contemn our ordination, succession, ministerial vocation, etc. (*The Hind and the Panther*, Part ii. v. 139), such are the harsh words we often find in his books.

[2] Preface to the *Religio Laici*.

[3] What Augustus says about Horace is charming, but cannot be quoted even in Latin.

This fiery game your active youth maintain'd
Not yet by years extinguish'd though restrain'd
A patriot both the king and country serves;
Prerogative and privilege preserves:
Of each our laws the certain limit show;
One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow:
Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand,
The barriers of the state on either hand;
May neither overflow, for then they drown the land.
When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode;
Like those that water'd once the paradise of God.
Some overpoise of sway, by turns, they share;
In peace the people, and the prince in war:
Consuls of moderate power in calms were made;
When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.
Patriots, in peace, assert the people's right,
With noble stubbornness resisting might;
No lawless mandates from the court receive,
Nor lend by force, but in a body give.' [1]

This serious converse shows a political mind, fed on the spectacle of affairs, having in the matter of public and practical debates the superiority which the French have in speculative discussions and social conversation. So, amidst the dryness of polemics break forth sudden splendours, a poetic fount, a prayer from the heart's depths; the English well of concentrated passion is on a sudden opened again with a flow and a dash which Dryden does not elsewhere exhibit:

'Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars
To lonely, weary, wand'ring travellers,
Is reason to the soul: and as on high
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
Not light us here; so Reason's glimm'ring ray
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
But guide us upward to a better day.
And as those nightly tapers disappear
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,
So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight,
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.' [2]

'But, gracious God! how well dost thou provide
For erring judgments an unerring guide!
Thy throne is darkness in th' abyss of light
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
O teach me to believe Thee thus conceal'd,
And search no farther than Thyself reveal'd;
But her alone for my director take.
Whom Thou hast promised never to forsake!
My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires;
My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,

[1] Epistle 15. xi. 75.

[2] Beginning of *Religio Laici*.

Follow'd false lights ; and when their glimpse was gone,
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am ;
Be Thine the glory and be mine the shame !
Good life be now my task ; my doubts are done.'[1]

Such is the poetry of these serious minds. After having strayed in the debaucheries and pomps of the Restoration, Dryden found his way to the grave emotions of inner life ; though a Romanist, he felt like a Protestant the wretchedness of man and the presence of grace : he was capable of enthusiasm. Here and there a manly and effective verse discloses, in the midst of his reasonings, the power of conception and the inspiration of desire. When the tragic is met with, he takes to it as to his own domain ; at need, he deals in the horrible. He has described the infernal chase, and the torture of the young girl worried by dogs, with the savage energy of Milton.[2] As a contrast, he loved nature : this taste always endures in England ; the sombre, reflective passions are unstrung in the wide peace and harmony of the fields. Landscapes are to be met with amidst theological disputation :

'New blossoms flourish and new flowers arise,
As God had been abroad, and walking there
Had left his footsteps and reformed the year.
The sunny hills from far were seen to glow
With glittering beams, and in the meads below
The burnished brooks appeared with liquid gold to flow.
As last they heard the foolish Cuckoo sing,
Whose note proclaimed the holy-day of spring.'[3]

Under his regular versification the artist's soul is brought to light ;[4] though contracted by habits of classical argument, though stiffened by controversy and polemics, though unable to create souls or to depict artless and delicate sentiments, he is a genuine poet : he is troubled, raised by beautiful sounds and forms ; he writes boldly under the pressure of vehement ideas ; he surrounds himself willingly with splendid images ; he is moved by the buzzing of their swarms, the glitter of their splendours ; he is, when he wishes it, a musician and a painter ; he writes stirring airs, which shake all the senses, even if they do not sink deep into the heart. Such is his *Alexander's Feast*, an ode in honour of St Cecilia's day, an admirable trumpet-blast, in which metre and sound impress upon the nerves the emotions of the mind, a masterpiece of rapture and of art, which Victor Hugo alone has come up

[1] *The Hind and the Panther*, Part i. *v.* 64–75. [2] *Theodore and Honoria*, xi.
[3] *The Hind and the Panther*, Part iii. *v.* 553–560.
[4] 'For her the weeping heavens become serene,
For her the ground is clad in cheerful green,
For her the nightingales are taught to sing,
And nature for her has delayed the spring.'
These charming verses on the Duchess of York remind one of those of La Fontaine on the Princess of Conti.

to. Alexander is on his throne in the palace of Persepolis; the lovely Thais sate by his side; before him, in a vast hall, his glorious captains. And Timotheus sings:

'The praise of Bacchus, then, the sweet musician sung;
Of Bacchus ever fair, and ever young.
The jolly God in triumph comes;
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums;
Flush'd with a purple grace,
He shews his honest face.
Now, give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.'

And at the stirring sounds the king is troubled; his cheeks are glowing; his battles return to his memory; he defies heaven and earth. Then a sad song depresses him. Timotheus mourns the death of the betrayed Darius. Then a tender song softens him; Timotheus lauds the dazzling beauty of Thais. Suddenly he strikes the lyre again.

'A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark! the horrid sound
Has raised up his head;
As awaked from the dead,
And amazed, he stares around.
Revenge, revenge! Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise;
See the snakes, that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair!
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain:
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.—
The princes applaud, with a furious joy.
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy:
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.'

[1] For instance, in the *Chant du Cirque*.

Thus already music softened, exalted, mastered men; Dryden's verses acquire power in describing it.

X.

This was one of his last works; brilliant and poetical, it was born amidst the greatest sadness. The king for whom he had written was deposed and in exile; the religion which he had embraced was despised and oppressed; a Roman Catholic and a royalist, he was bound to a conquered party, which the nation resentfully and mistrustfully considered as the natural enemy of liberty and reason. He had lost the two places which were his support; he lived wretchedly, burdened with a family, obliged to support his son abroad; treated as a hireling by a coarse publisher, forced to ask him for money to pay for a watch which he could not get on credit, beseeching Lord Bolingbroke to protect him against Tonson's insults, rated by this shopkeeper when the promised page was not finished on the stated day. His enemies persecuted him with pamphlets; the Puritan Collier lashed his comedies unfeelingly; he was damned without pity, but conscientiously. He had long been in ill health, crippled, constrained to write much, reduced to exaggerate flattery in order to earn from the great the indispensable money which the publishers would not give him:[1]

'What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write; and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me, by the lying character which has been given them of my morals.'[2]

Although well meant for his own part, he knew that his conduct had not always been worthy, and that all his writings would not endure. Born between two epochs, he had oscillated between two forms of life and two forms of thought, having reached the perfection of neither, having kept the faults of both; having found in surrounding manners no support worthy of his character, and in surrounding ideas no subject worthy of his talent. If he had founded criticism and good style, this criticism had only found scope in pedantic treatises or unconnected prefaces; this good style continued out of the track in inflated tragedies, dispersed over multiplied translations, scattered in occasional pieces, in odes written to order, in party poems, meeting only here and there an afflatus capable of employing it, and a subject capable of sustaining it. What efforts for such a moderate result! For a long time gravel and gout left him no peace; erysipelas seized one of his legs. In April 1700 he tried to go out; 'a slight inflammation in one of his toes became, from neglect, a gangrene;' the doctor would have tried amputation, but he decided that what remained him of health and happiness was not worth the pain. He died at the age of sixty-nine.

[1] He was paid two hundred and fifty guineas for ten thousand lines

[2] Postscript of Virgil's Works, as translated by Dryden, xv. p. 187.

CHAPTER III.

The Revolution.

I. The moral revolution of the seventeenth century—It advances side by side with the political revolution.

II. Brutality of the people — Gin-Riots — Corruption of the great — Political manners—Treasons under William III. and Anne—Morality under Walpole and Bute—Private manners—The roysterers—The atheists—Chesterfield's *Letters*—His polish and morality—Gay's *Beggars' Opera*—His elegance and satire.

III. Principles of civilisation in France and England—Conversation in France; how it ends in a revolution—Moral sense in England; how it ends in a reformation.

IV. Religion—Visible signs—Its profound sentiment—Religion popular—Life-like—Arians—Methodists.

V. The pulpit—Mediocrity and efficacy of preaching—Tillotson—His heaviness and solidity — Barrow—His abundance and minuteness — South — His harshness and energy—Comparison of French and English preachers.

VI. Theology—Comparison of the French and English apology for religion—Sherlock, Stillingfleet, Clarke—Theology not speculative but moral—The greatest minds are on the side of Christianity—Impotence of speculative philosophy—Berkeley, Newton, Locke, Hume, Reid—Development of moral philosophy—Smith, Pine, Hutcheson.

VII. The Constitution—Sentiment of right—Locke's *Essay on Government*—Theory of personal right accepted—Maintained by temperament, pride, and interest—Theory of personal right applied—Put in practice by elections, the press, the tribunals.

VIII. Parliamentary eloquence — Its energy and harshness — Lord Chatham—Junius—Fox—Sheridan—Pitt—Burke.

IX. Issue of the century's labours—Economic and moral transformation—Comparison of Reynolds' and Lely's portraits—Contrary doctrines and tendencies in France and England — Revolutionists and Conservatives — Judgment of Burke and the English people on the French Revolution.

I.

WITH the constitution of 1688 a new spirit appears in England. Slowly, gradually, the moral revolution accompanies the social: man changes with the state, in the same sense and for the same causes; character moulds itself to the situation; and little by little, in manners and in literature, we trace the empire of a serious, reflective, moral spirit, capable of discipline and independence, which can alone maintain and give effect to a constitution.

II.

This was not achieved without difficulty, and at first sight it seems as though England had gained nothing by this revolution of which she is so proud. The aspect of things under William, Anne, and the first two Georges, is repulsive. We are tempted to agree in Swift's judgment, to say that if he has depicted a Yahoo, it is because he has seen him; naked or drawn in his carriage, the Yahoo is not beautiful. We see but corruption in high places, brutality in low, a band of intriguers leading a mob of brutes. The human beast, inflamed by political passions, gives vent to cries and violence, burns Admiral Byng in effigy, demands his death, would destroy his house and park, sways from party to party, seems with its blind force ready to annihilate civil society. When Dr. Sacheverell was tried, the butcher boys, crossing-sweepers, chimney-sweepers, costermongers, drabs, the entire scum, conceiving the Church to be in danger, follow him with yells of rage and enthusiasm, and in the evening set to work to burn and pillage the dissenters' chapels. When Lord Bute, in defiance of public opinion, was set up in Pitt's place, he was assailed with stones, and was obliged to surround his carriage with a strong guard. At every political crisis was heard a riotous growl, were seen disorder, blows, broken heads. It was worse when the people's own interests were at stake. Gin had been discovered in 1684, and about half a century later England consumed seven millions of gallons.[1] The tavernkeepers on their signboards invited people to come and get drunk for a penny; for twopence they might get dead drunk; no charge for straw; the landlord dragged those who succumbed into a cellar, where they slept off their carouse. You could not walk London streets without meeting wretches, incapable of motion or thought, lying in the kennel, whom the care of the passers-by alone could prevent from being smothered in mud, or crushed by carriage-wheels. A tax was imposed to stop this madness: it was in vain; the judges dared not condemn, the informers were assassinated. The House gave way, and Walpole, finding himself threatened with a riot, withdrew his law.[2] All these bewigged and ermined lawyers, these bishops in lace, these embroidered and gold-bedizened lords, this fine government so cleverly balanced, was carried on the back of a vast and formidable brute, which as a rule would tramp peacefully though growlingly on, but which on a sudden, for a mere whim, could shake and crush it. It was clearly seen in 1780, during the riots of Lord George Gordon. Without reason or command, at the cry of No Popery the excited mob demolished the prisons, let loose the criminals, abused the Peers, and was for three

[1] 1742, Report of Lord Lonsdale.

[2] In the present inflamed temper of the people, the Act could not be carried into execution without an armed force.—*Speech of Sir Robert Walpole.*

days master of the town, burning, pillaging, and glutting itself. Barrels of gin were staved in and made rivers in the streets. Children and women on their knees drank themselves to death. Some became mad, others fell down besotted, and the burning and falling houses ended by destroying or burying them. Eleven years later, at Birmingham, the people sacked and gutted the houses of the Liberals and Dissenters, and were found next day in heaps, dead drunk in the roads and ditches. The riot of instinct in this over-strong and well-fed race is perilous. The popular bull dashed headlong at the first red rag which it thought it saw

The higher ranks were even less estimable than the lower. If there has been no more beneficial revolution than that of 1688, there has been none that was launched or supported by dirtier means. Treason was everywhere, not simple, but double and triple. Under William and Anne, admirals, ministers, councillors, favourites of the antechamber, corresponded and conspired with the same Stuarts whom they had sold, only to sell them again, with a complication of bargains, each destroying the last, and a complication of perjuries, each surpassing the last, until in the end no one knew whose or who he was. The greatest general of the age, the Duke of Marlborough, is one of the basest rogues in history, supported by his mistresses, a niggard user of the pay which he received from the State, systematically plundering his soldiers, trafficking in political secrets, a traitor to James, to William, to England, ready to risk his life to avoid changing a pair of wet boots, and to let an expedition of English soldiers fall into a French ambush. After him, Bolingbroke, a sceptic and cynic, minister in turn to Queen and Pretender, disloyal alike to both, a trafficker in consciences, marriages, and promises, who had squandered his talent in debauch and intrigues, to end in disgrace, impotence, and scorn.[1] Then Walpole was compelled to resign, after having been prime minister for twenty years, and who used to boast that 'every man had his price.'[2] Montesquieu wrote in 1729:[3]

'There are Scotch members who have only two hundred pounds for their vote, and sell it at this price. Englishmen are no longer worthy of their liberty. They sell it to the king; and if the king would sell it back to them, they would sell it him again.'

We must read in Bubb Doddington's *Diary* the candid fashion and pretty contrivances of this great traffic. So Dr. King states:

'He (Walpole) wanted to carry a question in the House of Commons, to which he knew there would be great opposition. . . . As he was passing through the Court of Requests, he met a member of the contrary party, whose avarice he imagined would not reject a large bribe. He took him aside, and said, "Such

[1] See Walpole's terrible speech against him, 1734

[2] See, for the truth of this statement, *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, 2 vols. ed. E. Warburton, 1851, i. 381, note.

[3] Notes during a journey in England made in 1729 with Lord Chesterfield

a question comes on this day; give me your vote, and here is a bank-bill of two thousand pounds," which he put into his hands. The member made him this answer: "Sir Robert, you have lately served some of my particular friends; and when my wife was last at court, the King was very gracious to her, which must have happened at your instance. I should therefore think myself very ungrateful (putting the bank bill into his pocket) if I were to refuse the favour you are now pleased to ask me."[1]

This is how a man of taste did business. Corruption was so fixed in public manners and in politics, that after the fall of Walpole, Lord Bute, who had denounced him, was obliged to practise and increase it. His colleague Fox changed the pay-office into a market, haggled about their price with hundreds of members, distributed in one morning twenty-five thousand pounds. Votes were only to be had for cash down, and yet at an important crisis these mercenaries would threaten to go over to the enemy, struck for wages, and demanded more. Nor did the leaders miss their own share. They sold themselves for, or paid themselves with, titles, dignities, sinecures. In order to get a place vacant, they gave the holder a pension of two, three, five, and even seven thousand a year. Pitt, the most upright, the leader of those who were called patriots, passed and retracted his word, attacked or defended Walpole, proposed war or peace, all to become or to continue a minister. Fox, his rival, was a sort of shameless sink. The Duke of Newcastle, 'whose name was perfidy,' a kind of living caricature, the most clumsy, ignorant, ridiculed and despised of the aristocracy, was in the Cabinet for thirty years and premier for ten years, by virtue of his connections, his wealth, of the elections which he managed, and the places in his gift. The fall of the Stuarts put the government into the hands of a few great families which, by means of rotten boroughs, bought members and high-sounding speeches, oppressed the king, moulded the passions of the mob, intrigued, lied, wrangled, and tried to swindle each other out of power.

Private manners were as lovely as public. As a rule, the reigning king detested his son; this son got into debt, demanded of Parliament an increase of allowance, allied himself with his father's enemies. George I. kept his wife in prison thirty-two years, and got drunk every night with his two plain mistresses. George II., who loved his wife, took mistresses to keep up appearances, rejoiced at his son's death, upset his father's will. His eldest son cheated at cards,[2] and one day at Kensington, having borrowed five thousand pounds from Bubb Doddington, said, when he saw him from the window: 'That man is reckoned one of the most sensible men in England, yet with all his parts I have just nicked him out of five thousand pounds.'[3] George IV. was a sort of coachman, gamester, scandalous roysterer, unprincipled

[1] Dr. W. King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his own Times*, 1818, 27

[2] Frederick died 1751. *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, i. 262

[3] Walpole's *Memoirs of George II.*, ed. Lord Holland, 3 vols., 2d ed., 1847, i. 77.

betting-man, whose proceedings all but got him excluded from the Jockey Club. The only upright man was George III., a poor half-witted dullard, who went mad, and whom his mother had kept in his youth, as though in a cloister. She gave as her reason the universal corruption of men of quality. 'The young men,' she said, 'were all rakes; the young women made love, instead of waiting till it was made to them.' In fact, vice was in fashion, not delicate vice as in France. 'Money,' wrote Montesquieu, 'is here esteemed above everything, honour and virtue not much. An Englishman must have a good dinner, a woman, and money. As he does not go much in society, and limits himself to this, so, as soon as his fortune is gone, and he can no longer have these things, he commits suicide or turns thief.' The young men had a superabundance of coarse energy, which made them mistake brutality for pleasure. The most celebrated called themselves Mohawks, and tyrannised over London by night. They stopped people, and made them dance by pricking their legs with their swords; sometimes they would put a woman in a tub, and set her rolling down a hill; others would place her on her head, with her feet in the air; some would flatten the nose of the wretch whom they had caught, and press his eyes out of their sockets. Swift, the comic writers, the novelists, have painted the baseness of this gross debauchery, craving for riot, living in drunkenness, revelling in obscenity, issuing in cruelty, ending by irreligion and atheism.[1] This violent and excessive mood requires to occupy itself proudly and daringly in the destruction of what men respect, and what institutions protect. These men attack the clergy by the same instinct which leads them to beat the watch. Collins, Tindal, Bolingbroke, are their doctors; the corruption of manners, the wont of treason, the elbowing of sects, the freedom of speech, the progress of sciences, and the fermentation of ideas, seemed as if they would dissolve Christianity. 'There is no religion in England,' said Montesquieu 'Four or five in the house of Commons go to mass or to the parliamentary sermon. . . . If any one speaks of religion, everybody begins to laugh. A man happening to say, "I believe this like an article of faith," everybody burst out laughing.' In fact, the phrase was provincial, and smacked of antiquity. The main thing was to be fashionable, and it is amusing to see from Lord Chesterfield in what this fashion consisted. Of justice and honour he only speaks transiently, and for form's sake. Before all, he says to his son, 'have manners, good breeding, and the graces.' He insists upon it in every letter, with a fulness and force of illustration which form an odd contrast:

'Mon cher ami, comment vont les grâces, les manières, les agrémens, et tous ces petits riens si nécessaires pour rendre un homme aimable? Les prenez-vous? y faites vous des progrès? . . . A propos, on m'assure que Madame de Blot sans avoir des traits, est jolie comme un cœur, et que nonobstant cela, elle s'en est

[1] Character of Birton in Voltaire's *Jenny*.

tenue jusqu'ici scrupuleusement à son mari, quoi qu'il y ait déjà plus d'un an qu'elle est mariée. Elle n'y pense pas.[1] . . . It seems ridiculous to tell you, but it is most certainly true, that your dancing-master is at this time the man in all Europe of the greatest importance to you.[2] . . . In your person you must be accurately clean; and your teeth, hands, and nails should be superlatively so. . . . Upon no account whatever put your fingers in your nose or ears.[3] What says Madame Dupin to you? For an attachment I should prefer her to la petite Blot.[4] . . . Pleasing women may in time be of service to you. They often please and govern others.'[5]

And he quotes to him as examples, Bolingbroke and Marlborough, the two worst roués of the age. Thus speaks a serious man, an umpire of education and taste.[6] He wishes to polish his son, to give him a French air, to add to solid diplomatic knowledge and large views of ambition an engaging, lively, and frivolous manner. This outward polish, which at Paris is of the true colour, is here but a shocking veneer. This transplanted politeness is a lie, this vivacity is senselessness, this worldly education seems fitted only to make actors and rogues.

So thought Gay in his *Beggars' Opera*, and the polished society applauded with *furore* the portrait which he drew of it. Sixty-three consecutive nights the piece ran amidst a tempest of laughter; the ladies had the songs written on their fans, and the principal actress, it is said, married a duke. What a satire! Thieves infested London, so that in 1728 the queen herself was almost robbed; they formed bands, with officers, a treasury, and multiplied, though every six weeks they were sent by the cartload to the gallows. Such was the society which Gay put on the stage. In his opinion, it was as good as the higher society; it was hard to discriminate: the manners, wit, conduct, morality in both were alike.

'Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.'[7]

Wherein, for example, is Peachum different from a great minister? Like him, he is a leader of a gang of thieves; like him, he has a register

[1] The original letter is in French. Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ed. Mahon, 4 vols., 1845; ii., April 15, 1751, p. 127.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 3, 1751, p. 72.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. Nov. 12, 1750, p. 57.

[4] *Ibid.* ii. May 16, 1751, p. 146.

[5] *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 21, 1751, p. 81.

[6] 'They (the English) are commonly twenty years old before they have spoken to anybody above their schoolmaster and the Fellows of their college. If they happen to have learning, it is only Greek and Latin, but not one word of modern history or modern languages. Thus prepared, they go abroad, as they call it; but, in truth, they stay at home all that while: for, being very awkward, confoundedly ashamed, and not speaking the languages, they go into no foreign company, at least none good; but dine and sup with one another only at the tavern.' *Ibid.* i., May 10, O. S., 1748, p. 136. 'I could wish you would ask him (Mr. Burrish for some letters to young fellows of pleasure or fashionable coquettes, that you may be *dans l'honnête débauche de Munich.*'—*Ibid.* ii. Oct. 3, 1753, p. 331.

[7] Speech of the Beggar in the Epilogue of the *Beggars' Opera.*

for thefts; like him, he receives money with both hands; like him, he contrives to have his friends caught and hung when they trouble him; he uses, like him, parliamentary language and classical comparisons; he has, like him, gravity, steadiness, and is eloquently indignant when his honour is suspected. You will answer, perhaps, that he quarrels with a comrade about the profits, and stabs him? But lately, Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Townsend had taken each other by the collar on a similar question. Listen to what Mrs. Peachum says of her daughter:

'Love him (Macheath) worse and worse! I thought the girl had been better bred.'[1]

The daughter observes:

'A woman knows how to be mercenary though she has never been in a court or at an assembly.'[2]

And the father remarks:

'My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang.'[3]

As to Macheath, he is a fit son-in-law for such a politician. If less brilliant in council than in action, that only suits his age. Point out a young and noble officer who has a better address, or performs finer actions. He is a highwayman, that is his bravery; he shares his booty with his friends, that is his generosity:

'You see, gentlemen, I am not a mere court-friend, who professes everything and will do nothing. . . . But we, gentlemen, have still honour enough to break through the corruptions of the world.'[4]

For the rest, he is gallant; he has half a dozen wives, a dozen children; he frequents stews, he is amiable towards the beauties whom he meets, he is easy in manners, he makes elegant bows to every one, he pays compliments to all:

'Mistress Slammekin! as careless and genteel as ever! all you fine ladies, who know your own beauty affect undress . . . If any of the ladies chuse gin, I hope they will be so free as to call for it.—Indeed, sir, I never drink strong waters, but when I have the colic.—Just the excuse of the fine ladies! why, a lady of quality is never without the colic.'[5]

Is it not the genuine tone of good company? And would you doubt that Macheath is a man of quality when you learn that he has deserved to be hung, and is not? Everything yields to such a proof. If, however, you wish for another, he would add that,

'As to conscience and nasty morals, I have as few drawbacks upon my pleasures as any man of quality in England; in those I am not at least vulgar.'[6]

After such a speech one must give in. Do not bring up the foulness of these manners; you see that there is nothing repulsive in them. These interiors of prisons and stews, these gambling-houses, this whiff o'

[1] Gray's *Plays*, 1772; *The Beggars' Opera*, i. 1. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 2. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 1
[6] I cannot find these lines in the edition I have consulted.—TR.

gin, this pander-traffic, and these pickpockets' calculations, by no means disgust the ladies, who applaud from the boxes. They sing the songs of Polly; their nerves shrink from no detail; they have already inhaled the filthy odours from the highly polished pastorals of the amiable poet.[1] They laugh to see Lucy show her pregnancy to Macheath, and give Polly 'rats-bane.' They are familiar with all the refinements of the gallows, and all the niceties of medicine. Mistress Trapes expounds her trade before them, and complains of having 'eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands.' Mr. Filch, a prison-prop, uses words which cannot even be quoted. A cruel keenness, sharpened by a stinging irony, flows through the work, like one of those London streams whose corrosive smells Swift and Gay have described; more than a hundred years later it still proclaims the dishonour of the society which is bespattered and befouled with its mire.

III.

These were but the externals; and close observers, like Voltaire did not misinterpret them. Betwixt the slime at the bottom and the scum on the surface rolled the great national river, which, purified by its own motion, already at intervals gave signs of its true colour, soon to display the powerful regularity of its course and the wholesome limpidity of its waters. It advanced in its native bed; every nation has one of its own, and flows down its proper slope. It is this slope which gives to each civilisation its degree and form, and it is this which we must endeavour to describe and measure.

To this end we have only to follow the travellers from the two countries who at this time crossed the Channel. Never did England regard and imitate France more, nor France England. To see the distinct current in which each nation flowed, we have but to open our eyes. Lord Chesterfield writes to his son:

'It must be owned, that the polite conversation of the men and women at Paris, though not always very deep, is much less futile and frivolous than ours here. It turns at least upon some subject, something of taste, some point of history, criticism, and even philosophy, which, though probably not quite so solid as Mr. Locke's, is however better, and more becoming rational beings, than our frivolous dissertations upon the weather or upon whist.'[2]

In fact, the French became civilised by conversation; not so the English. As soon as the Frenchman quits mechanical labour and coarse material life, even before he quits it, he converses: this is his

[1] In these Eclogues the ladies explain in good style that their friends have their lackeys for lovers: 'Her favours Sylvia shares amongst mankind; such gen'rous Love could never be confin'd.' Elsewhere the servant girl says to her mistress: 'Have you not fancy'd, in his frequent kiss, th' ungrateful leavings of a filthy miss?'

[2] Chesterfield's *Letters*, ii. April 22, O. S., 1751, p. 131. See, for a contrast Swift's *Essay on Polite Conversation*.

goal and his pleasure.[1] Barely has he escaped from religious wars and feudal isolation, when he makes his bow and has his say. With the Hotel de Rambouillet we get the fine drawing-room talk, which is to last two centuries: Germans, English, all Europe, either novices or dullards, listen to France open-mouthed, and from time to time clumsily attempt an imitation. How amiable are French talkers! What discrimination! What innate tact! With what grace and dexterity they can persuade, interest, amuse, stroke down sickly vanity, rivet the diverted attention, insinuate dangerous truth, ever soaring hundred feet above the tedium-point where their rivals are floundering with all their native heaviness. But, above all, how sharp they have soon become! Instinctively and without effort they light upon easy gesture, simple speech, sustained elegance, a characteristic piquancy, a perfect clearness. Their phrases, still formal under Balzac, are looser, lightened, launch out, flow speedily, and under Voltaire find their wings. Did any one ever see such a desire, such an art of pleasing? Pedantic sciences, political economy, theology, the sullen denizens of the Academy and the Sorbonne, speak but in epigrams. Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Lois* is also '*l'Esprit sur les lois*.' Rousseau's periods, which begat a revolution, were balanced, turned, polished for eighteen hours in his head. Voltaire's philosophy breaks out into a million sparks. Every idea must blossom into a witticism; thought is made to leap; all truth, the most thorny and the most sacred, becomes a pleasant drawing-room conceit, cast backward and forward, like a gilded shuttlecock, by delicate women's hands, without sullying the lace sleeves from which their slim arms emerge, or the garlands which the rosy Cupids unfold on the wainscoting. Everything must glitter, sparkle, or smile. The passions are refined, love is dimmed, the proprieties are multiplied, good manners are exaggerated. The refined man becomes 'sensitive.' From his wadded taffeta dressing-gown he keeps plucking his worked handkerchief to whisk away the moist omen of a tear; he lays his hand on his heart, he grows tender; he has become so delicate and correct, that an Englishman knows not whether to take him for an hysterical young woman or a dancing-master.[2] Take a clear view of this beribboned puppy, in his light-green dress, lisping out the songs of Florian. The genius of society which has led him to these fooleries has also led him elsewhere; for conversation, in France at least, is a chase after ideas. To this day, in spite of

[1] Even in 1826, Sidney Smith, arriving at Calais, writes (*Life and Letters*, ii. 274): 'What pleases me is the taste and ingenuity displayed in the shops, and the good manners and politeness of the people. Such is the state of manners, that you appear almost to have quitted a land of barbarians. I have not seen a cobbler who is not better bred than an English gentleman.'

[2] See *Evelina*, by Miss Burney, 3 vols., 1784; observe the character of the poor, genteel Frenchman, M. Dubois, who is made to tremble even whilst lying in the gutter. These very correct young ladies go to see Congreve's *Love for Love;* their

modern distrust and sadness, it is at table, over the coffee especially, that deep politics and the loftiest philosophy crop up. To think, above all, to think rapidly, is a recreation. The mind finds in it a sort of ball; think how eagerly it hastens thither. This is the source of all French culture. At the dawn of the age, the ladies, between a couple of bows, produced studied portraits and subtle dissertations; they understand Descartes, appreciate Nicole, approve Bossuet. Presently little suppers are introduced, and during the dessert they discuss the existence of God. Are not theology, morality, set forth in a noble or piquant style, pleasures for the drawing-room and adornments of luxury? Fancy finds place amongst them, floats about and sparkles like a light flame over all the subjects on which it feeds. What a flight was this of the eighteenth century! Was society ever more anxious for lofty truths, more bold in their search, more quick to discover, more ardent in embracing them? The perfumed marquises, these laced coxcombs, all these pretty, well-dressed, gallant, frivolous people, crowd to philosophy as to the opera; the origin of animated beings, the eels of Needham, the adventures of Jacques the Fatalist,[1] and the question of free judgment, the principles of political economy, and the calculations of the Man with Forty Crowns,[2]—all is to them a matter for paradoxes and discoveries. All the heavy rocks, which the men who had made it their business, were hewing and undermining laboriously in solitude, being carried along and polished in the public torrent, roll in myriads, mingled together with a joyous clatter, hurried onwards with an ever-increasing rapidity. There was no bar, no collision; they were not hindered by the practicability of their plans: they thought for thinking's sake; theories could be expanded at ease. In fact, this is how in France men have always conversed. They play with general truths; they glean one nimbly from the heap of facts in which it lay concealed, and develop it; they hover above observation in reason and rhetoric; they find themselves uncomfortable and common-place when they are not in the region of pure ideas. And in this respect the eighteenth century continues the seventeenth. The philosophers had described good breeding, flattery, misanthropy, avarice; they now examined liberty, tyranny, religion; they had studied man in himself; they now study him in the abstract. Religious and monarchical writers are of the same family as impious and revolutionary writers; Boileau leads up to Rousseau, Racine to Robespierre. Oratorical reasoning formed

parents are not afraid of showing them Miss Prue. See also, in *Evelina*, by way of contrast, the boorish character of the English captain; he throws Mrs. Duval twice in the mud; he says to his daughter Molly: 'I charge you, as you value my favour, that you'll never again be so impertinent as to have a taste of your own before my face' (i. 190). The change, even from sixty years ago, is surprising.

[1] The title of a philosophical novel by Diderot.—Tr.

[2] The title of a philosophical tale by Voltaire.—Tr.

the regular theatre and classical preaching; oratorical reason produces the Declaration of Rights and the *Contrat Social*. They form for themselves a certain idea of man, of his inclinations, faculties, duties; a mutilated idea, but the more clear as it was the more reduced. From being aristocratic it becomes popular; instead of being an amusement, it is a faith; from delicate and sceptical hands it passes to coarse and enthusiastic hands. From the lustre of the drawing-room they make a brand and a torch. Such is the current on which the French mind floated for two centuries, caressed by the refinements of an exquisite politeness, amused by a swarm of brilliant ideas, charmed by the promises of golden theories, till, thinking that it touched the cloud-palace, made bright by the future, it suddenly lost its footing and fell in the storm of the Revolution.

Altogether different is the path which English civilisation has taken. It is not the spirit of society which has made it, but moral sense; and the reason is, that here man is not as he is in France. The Frenchmen who became acquainted with England at this period were struck by it. 'In France,' says Montesquieu, 'I become friendly with everybody; in England with nobody. You must do here as the English do, live for yourself, care for no one, love no one, rely on no one.' They were of a singular genius, yet 'solitary and sad. They are reserved, live much in themselves, and think alone. Most of them having wit, are tormented by their very wit. In scorn or disgust of all things, they are unhappy amid so many reasons why they should not be so.' And Voltaire, like Montesquieu, continually alludes to the sombre energy of this character. He says that in London there are days when the wind is in the east, when it is customary for people to hang themselves; he relates shudderingly how a young girl cut her throat, and how the lover, without a word, bought back the knife. He is surprised to see 'so many Timons, so many splenetic misanthropes.' Whither will they go? There was one path which grew daily wider. The Englishman, naturally serious, meditative, and sad, did not regard life as a game or a pleasure; his eyes were habitually turned, not outward to smiling nature, but inward to the life of the soul; he examines himself, ever descends within himself, confines himself to the moral world, and at last sees no other beauty but that which shines there; he enthrones justice as the sole and absolute queen of humanity, and conceives the plan of disposing all his actions according to a rigid code. He has no lack of force in this; for his pride comes to assist his conscience. Having chosen himself and by himself the route, he would blush to quit it; he rejects temptations as his enemies; he feels that he is fighting and conquering,[1] that he is doing a difficult thing, that he is worthy of admiration, that he is a man. Moreover, he rescues himself from his capital foe,

[1] 'The consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman, of standing out against something and not giving in.'—*Tom Brown's School Days*

tedium, and satisfies his craving for action; having grasped his duties, he has a task for his faculties and an end in life, and this gives rise to associations, foundations, preachings; and finding more stedfast souls, and nerves more tightly strung, it sends them forth, without causing them too much suffering, to long strife, through ridicule and danger. The reflective character of the man has given a moral rule; the militant character now gives moral force. The mind, thus directed, is more apt than any other to comprehend duty; the will, thus armed, is more capable than any other of performing its duty. This is the fundamental faculty which is found in all parts of public life, concealed but present, like one of those deep and primeval rocks, which, lying far inland, give to all undulations of the soil a basis and a support.

IV.

To Protestantism first, and it is from this structure of mind that the Englishman is religious. Find your way through the knotty and uninviting bark. Voltaire laughs at it, and jests about the ranting of the preachers and the rigours of the faithful. 'There is no opera, no comedy, no concert on a Sunday in London; cards even are expressly forbidden, so that only persons of quality, and those who are called decent men, play on that day.' He amuses himself at the expense of the Anglicans, 'so scrupulous in collecting their tithes;' the Presbyterians, 'who look as if they were angry, and preach with a strong nasal accent;' the Quakers, 'who go to church to wait for the inspiration of God with their hats on their heads.' But is there nothing to be observed but these externals? And do you suppose that you are acquainted with a religion because you know the details of formulary and vestment? There is a common faith beneath all these sectarian differences: whatever be the form of Protestantism, its object and result are the culture of the moral sense; that is why it is popular here: principles and dogmas all make it suitable to the instincts of the nation. The sentiment which in the reformed man is the source of all, is anxiety of conscience; he pictures perfect justice, and feels that his uprightness, however great, cannot stand before that. He thinks of the Day of Judgment, and tells himself that he will be damned. He is troubled, and prostrates himself; he prays God to pardon his sins and renew his heart. He sees that neither by his desires, nor his deeds, nor by any ceremony or institution, nor by himself, nor by any creature, can he deserve the one or obtain the other. He betakes himself to Christ, the one Mediator; he prays to him, he feels his presence, he finds himself justified by his grace, elect, healed, transformed, predestinated. Thus understood, religion is a moral revolution; thus simplified, religion is only a moral revolution. Before this deep emotion, metaphysics and theology, ceremonies and discipline, all is blotted out or subordinate, and Christianity is simply the purification of the heart. Look now at these men, dressed in sombre colours, speaking through the nose on

Sundays, in a box of dark wood, whilst a man in bands, 'with the air of a Cato,' reads a psalm. Is there nothing in their heart but theological 'trash' or mechanical phrases? There is a deep sentiment—veneration. This bare Dissenters' meeting-house, this simple service and church of the Anglicans, leave them open to the impression of what they read and hear. For they do hear, and they do read; prayer in the vulgar tongue, psalms translated into the vulgar tongue, can penetrate through their senses to their souls. Be sure they do penetrate; and this is why they have such a collected mien. For the race is by nature capable of deep emotions, disposed by the vehemence of its imagination to comprehend the grand and tragic; and the Bible, which is to them the very word of eternal God, provides it. I know that to Voltaire it is only emphatic, unconnected, ridiculous; the sentiments with which it is filled are out of harmony with French sentiments. In England the hearers are on the level of its energy and harshness. The cries of anguish or admiration of the solitary Hebrew, the transports, the sudden outbursts of sublime passion, the thirst for justice, the growling of the thunder and the judgments of God, shake, across thirty centuries, these biblical souls. Their other books assist it. The Prayer Book, which is handed down as an heirloom with the old family Bible, speaks to all, to the dullest peasant, or the miner, the solemn accent of true prayer. The new-born poetry, the reviving religion of the sixteenth century, have impressed their magnificent gravity upon it; and we feel in it, as in Milton himself, the pulse of the twofold inspiration which then lifted a man out of himself and raised him to heaven. Their knees bend when they listen to it. The Confession of Faith, the collects for the sick, for the dying, in case of public misfortune or private grief, the lofty sentences of impassioned and sustained eloquence, transport a man to some unknown and august world. Let the fine gentlemen yawn, mock, and succeed in not understanding: I am sure that, of the others, many are moved. The idea of dark death and of the limitless ocean, to which the poor weak soul must descend, the thought of this invisible justice, ever present, ever foreseeing, on which the changing show of visible things depends, enlighten them with unexpected beams. The physical world and its laws seem to them but a phantom and a figure; they see nothing more real than justice; it is the sum of humanity, as of nature. This is the deep sentiment which on Sunday closes the theatre, discourages pleasures, fills the churches; this it is which pierces the breastplate of the primitive spirit and the corporeal dulness. This shopkeeper, who all the week has been counting his bales or drawing up columns of figures; this cattle-breeding squire, who can only bawl, drink, jump a fence; these yeomen, these cottagers, who amuse themselves, in order to draw blood whilst boxing, or vie with each other in grinning through a horse-collar,—all these uncultivated souls, immersed in material life, receive thus from their religion a moral life. They love it; you will hear it in the

yells of a mob, rising like a thunderstorm, when a rash hand touches or seems to touch the Church. You will see it in the sale of Protestant devotional books, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, alone able to force their way to the window-ledge of the yeoman and squire, where four volumes, their whole library, rest amid the fishing-tackle. You can only move the men of this race by moral reflections and religious emotions. The cooled Puritan spirit still broods underground, and is drawn in the only direction where fuel, air, fire, and action are to be found.

We obtain a glimpse of it when we look at the sects. In France, Jansenists and Jesuits seem to be puppets of another century, fighting for the amusement of this. Here Quakers, Independents, Baptists exist, serious, honoured, recognised by the State, adorned by able writers, by deep scholars, by virtuous men, by founders of nations.[1] Their piety causes their disputes; it is because they will belief, that they differ in belief: the only men without religion are those who do not care for religion. A motionless faith is soon a dead faith; and when a man becomes a sectarian, it is because he is fervent. This Christianity lives because it is developed; we see the sap, always flowing from the Protestant inquiry and faith, re-enter the old dogmas, dried up for five hundred years. Voltaire, when he came to England, was surprised to find Arians, and amongst them the first thinkers in England—Clarke, Newton himself. Not only dogma, but feeling, is renewed; beyond the speculative Arians were the practical Methodists; behind Newton and Clarke came Whitfield and Wesley.

No history more deeply illustrates the English character than that of these two men. In spite of Hume and Voltaire, they founded a monastical and convulsionary sect, and triumph through rigour and exaggeration, which would have ruined them in France. Wesley was a scholar, an Oxford student, and he believed in the devil; he attributes to him sickness, nightmare, storms, earthquakes. His family heard supernatural noises; his father had been thrice pushed by a ghost; he himself saw the hand of God in the commonest events of life. One day at Birmingham, overtaken by a hailstorm, he felt that he received this warning, because at table he had not sufficiently exhorted the people who dined with him; when he had to determine on anything, he looked out by chance for a text of Scripture, in order to decide. At Oxford he fasted and wearied himself until he spat blood, and almost died; at sea, when he departed for America, he only ate bread, and slept on deck; he lived the life of an apostle, giving away all that he earned, travelling and preaching all the year, and every year, till the age of eighty-eight;[2] it has been reckoned

[1] William Penn.

[2] On one tour he slept three weeks on the bare boards. One day, at three in the morning, he said to Nelson, his companion: 'Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer. I have one whole side yet; for the skin is off but on one side.'—Southey's *Life of Wesley*, 2 vols, 1820, ii. ch. xv. 54.

that he gave away thirty thousand pounds, travelled about a hundred thousand miles, and preached forty thousand sermons. What could such a man have done in France in the eighteenth century? Here he was listened to and followed, at his death he had eighty thousand disciples; now he has a million. The qualms of conscience, which forced him in this direction, pushed others in his footsteps. Nothing is more striking than the confession of his preachers, mostly low-born and laymen. George Story had the spleen, dreamed and mused gloomily; took to slandering himself and the occupations of men. Mark Bond thought himself damned, because when a boy he had pronounced once a blasphemy; he read and prayed unceasingly and in vain, and at last in despair enlisted, with the hope of being killed. John Haime had visions, howled, and thought he saw the devil. Another, a baker, had scruples because his master continued to bake on Sunday, wasted away with anxiety, and soon was nothing but a skeleton. These are the timorous and impassioned souls which furnish matter for religion and enthusiasm. They are numerous in this land, and on them doctrine took hold. Wesley declares that

'A string of opinions is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness. It is not an assent to any opinion, or any number of opinions.' 'This justifying faith implies not only the personal revelation, the inward evidence of Christianity, but likewise a sure and firm confidence in the individual believer that Christ died for *his* sin, loved *him*, and gave his life for *him*.'[1]

'By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him.'[2]

Elsewhere, a woman, disgusted with this madness, wished to leave, but had only gone a few steps when she fell into as violent fits as others. Conversions followed these transports; the converted paid their debts, forswore drunkenness, read the Bible, prayed, and went about exhorting others. Wesley collected them into societies, formed assemblies for mutual examination and edification, submitted spiritual life to a methodic discipline, built chapels, chose preachers, founded schools, organised enthusiasm. To this day his disciples spend three millions a year in missions to all parts of the world, and on the banks of the Mississippi and the Ohio their shoutings repeat the enthusiasm and the conversions of primitive inspiration. The same instinct is still revealed by the same signs; the doctrine of grace survives in uninterrupted energy, and the race, as in the sixteenth century, puts its poetry into the exaltation of the moral sense.

The faithful feels in himself the touch of a superior hand, and the birth of an unknown being. The old man has disappeared, a new man has taken his place, pardoned, purified, transfigured, steeped in joy and confidence, inclined to good as strongly as he was once drawn to evil. A miracle has been wrought, and it can be wrought at any moment,

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 176. [2] *Ibid.* i. 251.

suddenly, under any circumstances, without warning. Some sinner, the oldest and most hardened, without wishing it, without having dreamed of it, falls down weeping, his heart melted by grace. The dull thoughts, which fermented long in these gloomy imaginations, broke out suddenly into storms, and the dull brutal mood is shaken by nervous fits which it had not known before. Wesley, Whitfield, and their preachers went over all England preaching to the poor, the peasants, the workmen in the open air, sometimes to a congregation of twenty thousand people. 'The fire is kindled in the country.' There was sobbing and crying. At Kingswood, Whitfield, having collected the miners, a savage race, 'saw the white gutters made by the tears which plentifully fell down from their black cheeks, black as they came out from their coal-pits.'[1] Some trembled and fell; others had transports of joy, ecstasies. Southey writes thus of Thomas Olivers: 'His heart was broken, nor could he express the strong desires which he felt for righteousness. . . . He describes his feeling during a *Te Deum* at the cathedral, as if he had done with earth, and was praising God before His throne.'[2] The god and the brute, which each of us carries in himself, were let loose; the physical machine was upset; emotion was turned into madness, and the madness became contagious. An eye-witness says:

'At Everton some were shrieking, some roaring aloud. . . . The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life; and, indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish. Great numbers wept without any noise; others fell down as dead. . . . I stood upon the pew-seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able-bodied, fresh, healthy, countryman, but in a moment, when he seemed to think of nothing else, down he dropt, with a violence inconceivable. . . . I heard the stamping of his feet, ready to break the boards, as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew. . . . I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows; . . . his face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid his hand, turned either very red or almost black.'[3]

V.

A sort of theological smoke covers and hides this glowing hearth which burns in silence. A stranger who, at this time, had visited the country, would see in this religion only a choking vapour of arguments, controversies, and sermons. All those celebrated preachers, Barrow, Tillotson, South, Stillingfleet, Sherlock, Burnet, Baxter, Barclay, preached, says Addison, like automatons, monotonously, without moving their arms. For a Frenchman, for Voltaire, who read them, as he read everything, what a strange reading! Here is Tillotson first, the most authoritative of all, a kind of Father of the Church, so much admired that Dryden tells us that he learned from him the art of writ

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*, i, ch. vi. 236.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. ch. xvii. 111.
[3] *Ibid.* ii. ch. xxiv. 320.

ing well, and that his sermons, the only property which he left his widow, were bought by a publisher for two thousand five hundred pounds. This work has, in fact, some weight; there are three folio volumes, each of seven hundred pages. To open them, you must be a critic by profession, or absolutely desire to get saved. And now let us open them. 'The Wisdom of being Religious,'—such is his first sermon, much celebrated in his time, and the foundation of his success:

'These words consist of two propositions, which are not distinct in sense; . . . so that they differ only as cause and effect, which by a metonymy, used in all sorts of authors, are frequently put one for other.'[1]

This opening makes us uneasy. Is this great orator a teacher of grammar?

'Having thus explained the words, I come now to consider the proposition contained in them, which is this: That religion is the best knowledge and wisdom. This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways:—1*st*, By a direct proof of it; 2*d*, By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness; 3*d*, By vindicating religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence. I begin with the direct proof of this.'[2] . . .

Thereupon he gives his divisions. What a heavy demonstrator! One is tempted to turn over the leaves only, and not to read them. Let us examine his 'Forty-second sermon, against Evil-speaking:'

'*Firstly:* I shall consider the nature of this vice, and wherein it consists. *Secondly:* I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition to speak evil of no man. *Thirdly:* I shall show the evil of this practice, both in the causes and effects of it. *Fourthly:* I shall add some further considerations to dissuade men from it. *Fifthly:* I shall give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.'[3]

What a style! and it is the same throughout. There is nothing lifelike; it is a skeleton, with all its joints coarsely displayed. All the ideas are ticketed and numbered. The schoolmen were not worse. Neither rapture nor vehemence; no wit, no imagination, no original and brilliant idea, no philosophy; nothing but quotations of mere scholarship, and enumerations from a handbook. The dull argumentative reason comes with its pigeon-holed classifications upon a great truth of the heart or an impassioned word from the Bible, examines it 'positively and negatively,' draws thence 'a lesson and an encouragement,' arranges each part under its heading, patiently, indefatigably, so that sometimes three whole sermons are needed to complete the division and the proof, and each of them contains in its exordium the methodical abstract of all the points treated and the arguments supplied. Just so were the discussions of the Sorbonne carried on. At the court of

[1] Tillotson's *Sermons*, 12 vols., 1742. i. 1. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* iii. 188.

Louis XIV. Tillotson would have been taken for a man, who had run away from a seminary; Voltaire would call him a village curé. He has all that is necessary to shock men of the world, nothing to attract them. For he does not address men of the world, but Christians: his hearers neither need nor desire to be goaded or amused; they do not ask for analytical refinements, novelties in matter of feeling. They come to have Scripture explained to them, and morality demonstrated. The force of their zeal is only manifested by the gravity of their attention. Let others make a pretext out of a text; for them, they cling to it: it is the very word of God, they cannot dwell on it too much. They must have the sense of every word hunted out, the passage interpreted phrase by phrase, in itself, by the context, by similar passages, by general doctrines. They are willing to have the different readings, translations, interpretations expounded; they like to see the orator become a grammarian, a Hellenist, a scholiast. They are not repelled by all this dust of scholarship, which rises from the folios to settle upon their countenance. And the precept being laid down, they demand an enumeration of all the reasons which support it; they wish to be convinced, carry away in their heads a provision of good, approved motives to last the week. They came there seriously, as to their counting-house or their field, to get tired and wearied out with the task, to toil and dig conscientiously in theology and logic, to amend and better themselves. They would be angry at being dazzled. Their great sense, their ordinary common sense, is much better pleased with cold discussions; they want inquiries and methodical reports in the matter of morality, as in a matter of tariff, and treat conscience as port wine or herrings.

In this Tillotson is admirable. Doubtless he is pedantic, as Voltaire called him; he has all 'the bad manners learned at the university;' he has not been 'polished by association with women;' he is not like the French preachers, academicians, elegant discoursers, who by a courtly air, a well-delivered Advent sermon, the refinements of a purified style, earn the first vacant bishopric and the favour of high society. But he writes like a perfectly honest man; we can see that he is not aiming in any way at the glory of an orator; he wishes to persuade soundly, nothing more. We enjoy this clearness, this naturalness, this justness, this entire loyalty. In one of his sermons he says:

'Truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the show of anything be good for anything, I am sure sincerity is better; for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to? For to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. Now, the best way in the world for a man to seem to be anything, is really to be what he would seem to be. Besides, that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to

seem to have it are lost. There is something unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will easily discern from native beauty and complexion.

'It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other. Therefore, if any man think it convenient to seem good, let him be so indeed, and then his goodness will appear to everybody's satisfaction; . . . so that, upon all accounts, sincerity is true wisdom.'[1]

We are led to believe a man who speaks thus; we say to ourselves, 'This is true, he is right, we must do as he says.' The impression received is moral, not literary; the sermon is efficacious, not rhetorical; it does not please, it leads to action.

In this great manufactory of morality, where every loom goes on as regularly as its neighbour, with a monotonous noise, we distinguish two which sound louder and better than the rest—Barrow and South. Not that they were free from dulness. Barrow had all the air of a college pedant, and dressed so badly, that one day in London, before an audience who did not know him, he saw almost the whole congregation at once leave the church. He explained the word εὐχαριστεῖν in the pulpit with all the charm of a dictionary, commenting, translating, dividing, subdividing like the most formidable of scholiasts,[2] caring no more for the public than for himself; so that once, when he had spoken for three hours and a half before the Lord Mayor, he replied to those who asked him if he was not tired, 'I did, in fact, begin to be weary of standing so long.' But the heart and mind were so full and so rich, that his faults became a power. He had a geometrical method and clearness,[3] an inexhaustible fertility, extraordinary impetuosity and tenacity of logic, writing the same sermon three or four times over, insatiable in his craving to explain and prove, obstinately confined to his already overflowing thoughts, with a minuteness of division, an exactness of con-

[1] Tillotson's *Sermons*, iv. 363; Sermon 55, 'Of Sincerity towards God and Man,' John i. 47. This was the last sermon Tillotson preached; July 29, 1694.

[2] Barrow's *Theological Works*, 8 vols. Oxford, 1830, i. 179; Sermon viii., 'The Duty of Thanksgiving,' Eph. v. 20.

'These words, although (as the very syntax doth immediately discover) they bear a relation to, and have a fit coherence with, those that precede, may yet, (especially considering St. Paul's style and manner of expression in the preceptive and exhortative parts of his Epistles), without any violence or prejudice on either hand, be severed from the context, and considered distinctly by themselves. . . . First, then, concerning the duty itself, *to give thanks*, or rather *to be thankful* (for εὐχαριστεῖν doth not only signify *gratias agere, reddere, dicere*, to *give, render*, or *declare thanks*, but also *gratias habere, grate affectum esse*, to be *thankfully disposed*, to entertain a grateful affection, sense, or memory. . . . I say, concerning this duty itself, (abstractedly considered), as it involves a respect to benefits or good things received; so in its employment about them it imports, requires, or supposes these following particulars.'

[3] He was a mathematician of the highest order, and had resigned his chair to Newton.

nection, a superfluity of explanation, so astonishing that the hearer at last gives in; and yet the mind turns with the vast machine, carried away and doubled up as by the rolling weight of a flattening machine.

Listen to his sermon, 'Of the Love of God.' Never was a more copious and forcible analysis seen in England, so penetrating and unwearying a decomposition of an idea into all its parts, a more powerful logic, more rigorously collecting into one network all the threads of a subject:

'Although no such benefit or advantage can accrue to God, which may increase his essential and indefectible happiness; no harm or damage can arrive that may impair it (for he can be neither really more or less rich, or glorious, or joyful than he is; neither have our desire or our fear, our delight or our grief, our designs or our endeavours any object, any ground in those respects); yet hath he declared, that there be certain interests and concernments, which, out of his abundant goodness and condescension, he doth tender and prosecute as his own; as if he did really receive advantage by the good, and prejudice by the bad success, respectively belonging to them; that he earnestly desires and is greatly delighted with some things, very much dislikes and is grievously displeased with other things: for instance, that he bears a fatherly affection toward his creatures, and earnestly desires their welfare; and delights to see them enjoy the good he designed them; as also dislikes the contrary events; doth commiserate and condole their misery; that he is consequently well pleased when piety and justice, peace and order (the chief means conducing to our welfare) do flourish; and displeased, when impiety and iniquity, dissension and disorder (those certain sources of mischief to us) do prevail; that he is well satisfied with our rendering to him that obedience, honour, and respect, which are due to him; and highly offended with our injurious and disrespectful behaviour toward him, in the commission of sin and violation of his most just and holy commandments; so that there wants not sufficient matter of our exercising good-will both in affection and action toward God; we are capable both of wishing and (in a manner, as he will interpret and accept it) of doing good to him, by our concurrence with him in promoting those things which he approves and delights in, and in removing the contrary.'[1]

This entanglement wearies one, but what a force and dash is there in this meditative and complete thought! Truth thus supported on all its foundations can never be shaken. Observe the absence of rhetoric. There is no art here; the whole oratorical art consists in the desire thoroughly to explain and prove what he has to say. He is even loose and artless; and it is just this ingenuousness which raises him to the antique level. You may meet with an image in his writings which seems to belong to the finest period of Latin simplicity and dignity:

'The middle, we may observe, and the safest, and the fairest, and the most conspicuous places in cities are usually deputed for the erections of statues and monuments dedicated to the memory of worthy men, who have nobly deserved of their countries. In like manner should we in the heart and centre of our soul, in the

[1] Barrow's *Theological Works*, i., Sermon 23, 627.

best and highest apartments thereof, in the places most exposed to ordinary observation, and most secure from the invasions of worldly care, erect lively representations of, and lasting memorials unto, the divine bounty.'[1]

There is here a sort of effusion of gratitude; and at the end of the sermon, when we think him exhausted, the expansion becomes more copious by the enumeration of the unlimited blessings amidst which we float like fishes in the sea, not perceiving them, because we are surrounded and penetrated by them. During ten pages the idea overflows in a continuous and similar phrase, without fear of crowding or monotony, in spite of all rules, so loaded are the heart and imagination, and so satisfied are they to bring and collect all nature as a single offering:

'To him, the excellent quality, the noble end, the most obliging manner of whose beneficence doth surpass the matter thereof, and hugely augment the benefits: who, not compelled by any necessity, not obliged by any law (or previous compact), not induced by any extrinsic arguments, not inclined by our merit, not wearied with our importunities, not instigated by troublesome passions of pity, shame, or fear, (as we are wont to be), not flattered with promises of recompense, nor bribed with expectation of emolument, thence to accrue unto himself; but being absolute master of his own actions, only both lawgiver and counsellor to himself, all-sufficient, and incapable of admitting any accession to his perfect blissfulness; most willingly and freely, out of pure bounty and good-will, is our Friend and Benefactor; preventing not only our desires, but our knowledge; surpassing not our deserts only, but our wishes, yea, even our conceits, in the dispensation of his inestimable and unrequitable benefits; having no other drift in the collation of them, beside our real good and welfare, our profit and advantage, our pleasure and content.'[2]

Zealous energy and lack of taste; such are the features common to all this eloquence. Let us leave this mathematician, this man of the closet, this antique man, who proves too much and is too eager, and let us look out amongst the men of the world he who was called the wittiest of ecclesiastics, Robert South, as different from Barrow in his character and life as in his works and his mind; armed for war, an impassioned royalist, a partisan of divine right and passive obedience, an acrimonious controversialist, a defamer of the dissenters, a foe to the Act of Toleration, who never refused to use in his enmities the licence of an insult or a foul word. By his side Father Bridaine,[3] who seems so coarse to the French, was polished. His sermons are like a conversation of that time; and you know in what style they conversed then in England. South is afraid of no popular and impassioned image. He sets forth little vulgar facts, with their low and striking details. He never shrinks, he never minces matters; he speaks the language of the

[1] Barrow's *Theological Works*, i. 184; Sermon viii., 'The Duty of Thanksgiving,' Eph. v. 20.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 202.

[3] Jacques Bridaine (1701–1767), a celebrated and zealous French preacher whose sermons were always extempore, and hence not very cultivated and refined in style.—TR.

people. His style is anecdotic, striking, abrupt, with change of tone, forcible and clownish gestures, with every species of originality, vehemence, and boldness. He sneers in the pulpit, he rails, he plays the mimic and comedian. He paints his characters as if he had them before his eyes. The audience will recognise the originals again in the streets; they could put the names to the portraits. Read this bit on hypocrites:

'Suppose a man infinitely ambitious, and equally spiteful and malicious one who poisons the ears of great men by venomous whispers, and rises by the fall of better men than himself; yet if he steps forth with a Friday look and a Lenten face, with a blessed Jesu! and a mournful ditty for the vices of the times; oh! then he is a saint upon earth: an Ambrose or an Augustine (I mean not for that earthly trash of book-learning; for, alas! such are above that, or at least that's above them), but for zeal and for fasting, for a devout elevation of the eyes, and a holy rage against other men's sins. And happy those ladies and religious dames, characterized in the 2d of Timothy, ch. iii. 6, who can have such self-denying, thriving, able men for their confessors! and thrice happy those families where they vouchsafe to take their Friday night's refreshments! and thereby demonstrate to the world what Christian abstinence, and what primitive, self-mortifying rigor there is in forbearing a dinner, that they may have the better stomach to their supper. In fine, the whole world stands in admiration of them; fools are fond of them, and wise men are afraid of them; they are talked of, they are pointed at; and, as they order the matter, they draw the eyes of all men after them, and generally something else.'[1]

A man so frank of speech was sure to commend frankness; he has done so with the pointed irony, the brutality of a Wycherley. The pulpit had the plain-dealing and coarseness of the stage; and in this picture of forcible, honest men, whom the world considers as bad characters, we find the pungent familiarity of the *Plain Dealer:*

'Again, there are some, who have a certain ill-natured stiffness (forsooth) in their tongue, so as not to be able to applaud and keep pace with this or that self-admiring, vain-glorious Thraso, while he is pluming and praising himself, and telling fulsome stories in his own commendation for three or four hours by the clock, and at the same time reviling and throwing dirt upon all mankind besides.

'There is also a sort of odd ill-natured men, whom neither hopes nor fears, frowns nor favours, can prevail upon, to have any of the cast, beggarly, forlorn nieces or kinswomen of any lord or grandee, spiritual or temporal, trumped upon them.

'To which we may add another sort of obstinate ill-natured persons, who are not to be brought by any one's guilt or greatness, to speak or write, or to swear or lie, as they are bidden, or to give up their own consciences in a compliment to those, who have none themselves.

'And lastly, there are some, so extremely ill-natured, as to think it very lawful and allowable for them to be sensible when they are injured or oppressed, when they are slandered in their good names, and wronged in their just interests;

[1] South's *Sermons*, 1715, 11 vols., vi. 110. The fourth and last discourse from those words in Isaiah, v. 20.

and, withal, to dare to own what they find, and feel, without being such beasts of burden as to bear tamely whatsoever is cast upon them; or such spaniels as to lick the foot which kicks them, or to thank the goodly great one for doing them all these back favours.'[1]

In this eccentric style all blows tell; we might call it a boxing-match in which sneers inflict bruises. But see the effect of these churls' vulgarities. We issue thence with a soul full of energetic feeling; we have seen the very objects, as they are, without disguise; we find ourselves battered, but seized by a vigorous hand. This pulpit is effective; and indeed, as compared with the French pulpit, this is its characteristic. These sermons have not the art and artifice, the propriety and moderation of French sermons; they are not, like the latter, monuments of style, composition, harmony, veiled science, tempered imagination, disguised logic, sustained good taste, exquisite proportion, equal to the harangues of the Roman forum and the Athenian agora. They are not classical. No, they are practical. A rude shovel, roughly handled, and encrusted with pedantic rust, was necessary to dig in this coarse civilisation. The delicate French gardening would have done nothing with it. If Barrow is redundant, Tillotson heavy, South vulgar, the rest unreadable, they are all convincing; their sermons are not models of elegance, but instruments of edification. Their glory is not in their books, but in their works. They have framed morals, not literary remains.

VI.

To form morals is not all; there are creeds to be defended. We must combat doubt as well as vice, and theology goes side by side with preaching. It abounds at this moment in England. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Baptists, Antitrinitarians, wrangle with each other, 'as heartily as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit,' and are never tired of inventing weapons. What is there to take hold of and preserve in all this arsenal? In France at least theology is lofty; the fairest flowers of mind and genius have there grown over the briars of scholastics; if the subject repels, the dress attracts. Pascal and Bossuet, Fénelon and La Bruyère, Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu, friends and enemies, all have scattered their wealth of pearls and gold. Over the threadbare woof of barren doctrines the seventeenth century has embroidered a majestic stole of purple and silk; and the eighteenth century, crumpling and tearing it, scatters it in a thousand golden threads, which sparkle like a ball-dress. But in England all is dull, dry, and gloomy; the great men themselves, Addison and Locke, when they meddle in the defence of Christianity, become flat and wearisome. From Chillingworth to Paley, apologies, refutations, expositions, discussions, multiply and make us yawn; they reason well, and that is all. The theologian enters on a campaign against the Papists of the

[1] South's *Sermons*, vi. 118. The fourth and last discourse from these words in Isaiah, v. 20.

seventeenth century and the Deists of the eighteenth,[1] like a tactician, by rule, taking a position on a principle, throwing up a breastwork of arguments, covering all with texts, marching calmly underground in the long shafts which he has dug; we approach and see a sallow-faced pioneer creep out, with frowning brow, stiff hands, dirty clothes; he thinks he is protected from all attacks; his eyes, glued to the ground, have not seen the broad level road beside his bastion, by which the enemy will outflank and surprise him. A sort of incurable mediocrity keeps men like him, mattock in hand, in their trenches, where no one is likely to pass. They understand neither their texts nor their formulas. They are impotent in criticism and philosophy. They treat the poetic figures of Scripture, the bold style, the approximations to improvisation, the mystical Hebrew emotion, the subtilties and abstractions of Alexandrian metaphysics, with the precision of a jurist and a psychologist. They would actually make Scripture an exact code of prescriptions and definitions, drawn up by a convention of legislators. Open the first that comes to hand, one of the oldest—John Hales. He comments on a passage of St. Matthew, where a question arises on a matter forbidden on the Sabbath. What was this, 'to go amongst the corn, to pluck the ears or to eat thereof?' Then follow divisions and arguments raining down by myriads.[2] Take the most celebrated: Sherlock, applying the new psychology, invents an explanation of the Trinity, and imagines three divine souls, each knowing what passes in the others. Stillingfleet refutes Locke, who thought that the soul in the resurrection, though having a body, would not perhaps have exactly the same one in which it had lived. Go to the most illustrious of all, the learned Clarke, a mathematician, philosopher, scholar, theologian; he is busy patching up Arianism. The great Newton himself comments on the Apocalypse, and proves that the Pope is Antichrist. In vain have they genius; as soon as they touch religion, they dote, dwindle; they make no way; they are wedged in, and obstinately knock their heads against the same obstacle. Generation after generation they bury themselves in the hereditary hole with English patience and conscientiousness, whilst the enemy marches by, a league off. Yet in the

[1] I thought it necessary to look into the Socinian pamphlets, which have swarmed so much among us within a few years.—Stillingfleet, *In Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1697.

[2] He examines, amongst other things, 'the sin against the Holy Ghost.' They would much like to know in what this consists. But nothing is more obscure. Calvin and other theologians each gave a different definition. After a minute dissertation, John Hales concludes thus: 'And though negative proofs from Scripture are not demonstrative, yet the general silence of the apostles may at least help to infer a probability that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not committable by any Christian who lived not in the time of our Saviour' (1636). This is a training for argument. So, in Italy, the discussion about giving drawers to, or withholding them from the Capuchins, developed political and diplomatic ability

hole they argue; they square it, round it, face it with stones, then with bricks, and yet wonder that with all these expedients the enemy marches on. I have read a host of these treatises, and I have not gleaned an idea. A man is annoyed to see so much lost labour; is amazed that, during so many generations, people so virtuous, zealous, thoughtful, loyal, well read, well trained in discussion, have only succeeded in filling the lower shelves of libraries. We muse sadly on this second scholastic theology, and end by perceiving that if it was without effect in the kingdom of science, it was because it only strove to bear fruit in the kingdom of action.

All these speculative minds were so in appearance only. They were apologists, and not inquirers. They busy themselves with morality, not with truth.[1] They would shrink from treating God as a hypothesis, and the Bible as a document. They would see a vicious tendency in the wide impartiality of criticism and philosophy. They would have scruples of conscience if they indulged in free inquiry without limitation. In fact, there is a sort of sin in really free inquiry, because it presupposes scepticism, abandons respect, weighs good and evil in the same balance, and equally receives all doctrines, scandalous or edifying, as soon as they are proved. They banish these dissolving speculations; they look on them as occupations of the slothful; they seek from argument only motives and means for right conduct. They do not love it for itself; they repress it as soon as it strives to become independent; they demand that reason shall be Christian and Protestant; they would give it the lie under any other form; they reduce it to the humble position of a handmaid, and set over it their own inner biblical and utilitarian sense. In vain did free-thinkers arise in the beginning of the century; forty years later,[2] they were drowned in forgetfulness. Deism and atheism were here only a transient eruption developed on the surface of the social body, in the bad air of the great world and the plethora of native energy. Professed irreligious men—Toland, Tindal, Mandeville, Bolingbroke—met foes stronger than themselves. The leaders of experimental philosophy,[3] the most learned and accredited of scholars of the age,[4] the most witty authors, the most beloved and able,[5] all the authority of science and genius was employed in putting them down. Refutations abound. Every year, on the foundation of Robert Boyle, men noted for their talent or knowledge come to London

[1] 'The Scripture is a book of morality, and not of philosophy. Everything there relates to practice. . . . It is evident, from a cursory view of the Old and New Testament, that they are miscellaneous books, some parts of which are history, others writ in a poetical style, and others prophetical; but the design of them all, is professedly to recommend the practice of true religion and virtue.'—John Clarke, Chaplain of the King, 1721.

[2] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

[3] Ray, Boyle, Barrow, Newton. [4] Bentley, Clarke, Warburton, Berkeley.

[5] Locke, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Richardson.

to preach eight sermons, 'to establish the Christian religion against atheists, deists, pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews.' And these apologies are solid, able to convince a liberal mind, infallible for the conviction of a moral mind. The clergymen who write them, Clarke, Bentley, Law, Watt, Warburton, Butler, are not below the lay science and intellect. Moreover, the lay element assists them. Addison writes the *Evidences of Christianity*, Locke the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Ray the *Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation.* Over and above this concert of serious words is heard a ringing voice: Swift compliments with his terrible irony the elegant rogues who entertained the wise idea of abolishing Christianity. If they had been ten times more numerous they would not have succeeded, for they had nothing to substitute in its place. Lofty speculation, which alone could take the ground, was shown or declared to be impotent. On all sides philosophical conceptions dwindle or come to nought. If Berkeley lighted on one, the denial of matter, it stands alone, without influence on the public, as it were a theological *coup d'état*, like a pious man who wants to undermine immorality and materialism at their basis. Newton attained at most an incomplete idea of space, and was only a mathematician. Locke, almost as poor,[1] gropes about, hesitates, does little more than guess, doubt, start an opinion to advance and withdraw it by turns, not seeing its far-off consequences, nor, above all, exhausting anything. In short, he forbids himself lofty questions, and is very much inclined to forbid them to us. He has written a book to inquire what objects are within our reach, or above our comprehension. He seeks for our limitations; he soon finds them, and troubles himself no further. Let us shut ourselves in our own little domain, and work there diligently. 'Our business in this world is not to know all things, but those which regard the conduct of our life.' If Hume, more bold, goes further, it is in the same track: he preserves nothing of lofty science; he abolishes speculation altogether. According to him, we know neither substances, causes, nor laws. When we affirm that an object is conjoined to another object, it is because we choose, by custom; 'all events seem entirely loose and separate.' If we give them 'a tie,' it is our imagination which creates it;[2] there is nothing true but doubt. The conclusion is, that we shall do well to purge our mind of all theory, and only believe in order that we may act. Let us examine our wings only in order to cut them off, and let us confine

[1] 'Paupertina philosophia,' says Leibnitz.

[2] After the constant conjunction of two objects—heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity—we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other. All inferences from experience are effects of custom, not of reasoning. . . . Upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connection which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate; one event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected.

ourselves to walking. So finished a pyrrhonism serves only to cast the world back upon established beliefs. In fact, Reid, being honest, is alarmed. He sees society broken up, God vanishing in smoke, the family evaporating in hypotheses. He objects as a father of a family, a good citizen, a religious man, and sets up common sense as a sovereign judge of truth. Rarely, I think, in this world has speculation fallen lower. Reid does not even understand the systems which he discusses; he lifts his hands to heaven when he tries to expound Aristotle and Leibnitz. If some municipal body were to order a system, it would be this churchwarden-philosophy. At bottom the men of this country did not care for metaphysics; to interest them, it must be reduced to psychology. Then it becomes a science of observation, positive and useful, like botany; still the best fruit which they pluck from it is a theory of moral sentiments. In this domain Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Price, Smith, Ferguson, and Hume himself prefer to labour; here they find their most original and durable ideas. On this point the public instinct is so strong, that it enrols the most independent minds in its service, and only permits them the discoveries which turn to its profit. Except two or three, chiefly purely literary men, and who are French or Frenchified in mind, they busy themselves only with morals. This idea rallies round Christianity all the forces which in France Voltaire ranges against it. They all defend it on the same ground—as a tie for civil society, and as a support for private virtue. Formerly instinct supported it; now opinion consecrates it; and it is the same secret force which, by an insensible labour, at present adds the weight of opinion to the pressure of instinct. Moral sense, having preserved for it the fidelity of the lower classes, conquered for it the assent of the loftier intellects. Moral sense transfers it from the public conscience to the literary world, and from being popular, makes it official.

VII.

One would hardly suspect this public tendency, after taking a distant view of the English constitution; but on a closer view it is the first thing we see. It appears to be an aggregate of privileges, that is, of sanctioned injustices. The truth is, that it is a body of contracts, that is, of recognised rights. Every one, great or small, has its own, which he defends with all his might. My lands, my property, my chartered right, whatsoever it be, ancient, indirect, superfluous, individual, public, none shall touch it, king, lords, nor commons. Is it of the value of five shillings? I will defend it like a million pounds; it is my person which they would fetter. I will leave my business, lose my time, throw away my money, make associations, pay fines, go to prison, perish in the attempt; no matter; I shall show that I am no coward, that I will not bend under injustice, that I will not yield a portion of my right.

By this sentiment Englishmen have conquered and preserved public

liberty. This feeling, after they had dethroned Charles I. and James II., is shaped into principles in the Declaration of 1689, and is developed by Locke in demonstrations.[1] 'All men,' says Locke, 'are naturally in a state of perfect freedom, also of equality.'[2] 'In the State of Nature every one has the Executive power of the Law of Nature,'[3] *i.e.* of judging, punishing, making war, ruling his family and dependents. 'There only is political society where every one of the members hath quitted this natural Power, resign'd it up into the Hands of the Community in all Cases that exclude him not from appealing for Protection to the Law established by it.'[4]

'Those who are united into one body and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority . . . to punish offenders, are in civil society one with another.[5] As for the ruler (it is said), he ought to be absolute . . . because he has power to do more hurt and wrong; it is right when he does it. . . .This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes; but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions.[6] The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it.'[7]

Umpires, rules of arbitration, this is all which their federation can impose upon them. They are freemen, who, having made a mutual treaty, are still free. Their society does not found, but guarantees their rights. And official acts here sustain abstract theory. When Parliament declares the throne vacant, its first argument is, that the king has violated the original contract by which he was king. When the Commons impeach Sacheverell, it was in order publicly to maintain that the constitution of England was founded on a contract, and that the subjects of this kingdom have, in their different public and private capacities, as legal a title to the possession of the rights accorded to them by law, as the prince has to the possession of the crown. When Lord Chatham defended the election of Wilkes, it was by laying down that 'the rights of the greatest and of the meanest subjects now stand

[1] We must read Sir Robert Filmore's *Patriarcha* on the prevailing theory, in order to see from what a quagmire of follies people emerged. He said that Adam, on his creation, had received an absolute and regal power over the universe; that in every society of men there was one legitimate king, the direct heir of Adam. 'Some say it was by lot, and others that Noah sailed round the Mediterranean in ten years, and divided the world into Asia, Afric, and Europa—portions for his three sons.' Compare Bossuet, *Politique fondée sur l'Ecriture*. At this epoch moral science was being emancipated from theology.

[2] Locke, *Of Civil Government*, 1714, book ii, ch. ii. § 4.

[3] *Ibid.* § 13.

[4] *Ibid* ii. ch. vii. § 87.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.* ii. ch. vii. § 93.

Ibid ii. ch. viii. § 95.

upon the same foundation, the security of law common to all. . . . When the people had lost their rights, those of the peerage would soon become insignificant.' It was no supposition or philosophy which rounded them, but an act and deed, Magna Charta, the Petition of Rights, the Habeas Corpus Act, and the whole body of the statute laws.

These rights are there, inscribed on parchments, stored up in archives, signed, sealed, authentic; those of the farmer and prince are traced on the same page, in the same ink, by the same writer; both are on an equality on this vellum; the gloved hand clasps the horny palm. What though they are unequal? It is by mutual accord: the peasant is as much a master in his cottage, with his rye-bread and his nine shillings a week,[1] as the Duke of Marlborough in Blenheim Castle, with his many thousands a year in places and pensions.

There they are, these men, standing firm and ready to defend themselves. Pursue this sentiment of right in the details of political life; the force of brutal temperament and concentrated or savage passions provides arms. If you go to an election, the first thing you see is the full tables.[2] They cram themselves at the candidate's expense: ale, gin, brandy are set flowing without concealment; the victuals descend into their electoral stomachs, and their faces grow red. At the same time they become furious. 'Every glass they pour down serves to increase their animosity. Many an honest man, before as harmless as a tame rabbit, when loaded with a single election dinner, has become more dangerous than a charged culverin.'[3] The wrangle turns into a fight, and the pugnacious instinct, once loosed, craves for blows. The candidates bawl against each other, till they are hoarse. They are chaired about, to the great peril of their necks; the mob yells, cheers, grows warm with the motion, the defiance, the row; big words of patriotism peal out, anger and drink inflame their veins, fists are clenched, clubs are at work, and bulldog passions regulate the greatest interests of the country. Let all beware how they draw them down on their heads: Lords, Commons, King, they will spare no one; and when Government would oppress a man in spite of them, they will compel Government to suppress their own law.

They are not to be muzzled, they make that a matter of pride

[1] De Foe's estimate.

[2] 'Their eating, indeed, amazes me; had I five hundred heads, and were each head furnished with brains, yet would they all be insufficient to compute the number of cows, pigs, geese, and turkies which upon this occasion die for the good of their country! . . . On the contrary, they seem to lose their temper as they lose their appetites; every morsel they swallow. The mob meet upon the debate, fight themselves sober, and then draw off to get drunk again, and charge for another encounter.'—Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, Letter cxii., 'An Election described.' See also Hogarth's prints.

[3] *Ibid.*

With them, pride assists instinct in defending the right. Each feels that 'his house is his castle,' and that the law keeps guard at his door. Each tells himself that he is defended against private insolence, that the public arbitrary power will never touch him, that he has 'his body,' and can answer blows by blows, wounds by wounds, that he will be judged by an impartial jury and a law common to all. 'Even if an Englishman,' says Montesquieu, 'has as many enemies as hairs on his head, nothing will happen to him. The laws there were not made for one more than for another; each looks on himself as a king, and the men of this nation are more confederates than fellow-citizens.' This goes so far, 'that there is hardly a day when some one does not lose respect for the king. Lately my Lady Bell Molineux, a regular virago, sent to have the trees pulled up from a small piece of land which the queen had bought for Kensington, and went to law with her, without having wished, under any pretext, to come to terms with her, and made the queen's secretary wait three hours.' 'When they come to France, they are deeply astonished to see the sway of "the king's good pleasure," the Bastille, the *lettres de cachet;* a gentleman who dare not live on his estate in the country, for fear of the governor of the province; a groom of the king's chamber, who, for a cut with the razor, kills a poor barber with impunity.'[1] In England, 'one man does not fear another.' Converse with any of them, you will find how greatly this security raises their hearts and courage. A sailor who rowed Voltaire about, and may be pressed next day into the fleet, prefers his condition to that of the Frenchman, and looks on him with pity, whilst taking his five shillings. The vastness of their pride breaks forth at every step and in every page. An Englishman, says Chesterfield, thinks himself equal to beating three Frenchmen. They would willingly declare that they are in the herd of men as bulls in a herd of cattle. You hear them bragging of their boxing, of their meat and ale, of all that can support the force and energy of their virile will. Roast-beef and beer make stronger arms than cold water and frogs.[2] In the eyes of the vulgar, the French are starved wigmakers, papists, and serfs, an inferior kind of creatures, who can neither call their bodies nor their souls their own, puppets and tools in the hands of a master and a priest. As for themselves,

> 'Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state
> With daring aims irregularly great.
> Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
> I see the lords of human-kind pass by;
> Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
> By forms unfashion'd, fresh from nature's hand,
> Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
> True to imagin'd right, above control,

[1] Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. 40.

[2] See Hogarth's prints.

> While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
> And learns to venerate himself as man.' [1]

Men thus constituted can become impassioned in public concerns, for they are their own concerns; in France, they are only the business of the king and of Madame de Pompadour.[2] Here, political parties are as ardent as sects: High Church and Low Church, capitalists and landed proprietors, court nobility and county families, they have their dogmas their theories, their manners, and their hatreds, like Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Quakers. The country squire rails, after his wine, at the House of Hanover, drinks to the king over the water; the Whig in London, on the 13th of January, drinks to the man in the mask,[3] and then to the man who will do the same thing without a mask. They imprisoned, exiled, beheaded each other, and Parliament re-echoed daily with the fury of their denunciations. Political, like religious life, wells up and overflows, and its outbursts only mark the force of the flame which nourishes it. The eagerness of parties, in State as in faith, is a proof of zeal; constant quiet is only general indifference; and if they fight at elections, it is because they take an interest in them. Here 'a tiler had the newspaper brought to him on the roof that he might read it.' A stranger who reads the papers 'would think the country on the eve of a revolution.' When Government takes a step, the public feels itself involved in it; its honour and its welfare are being disposed of by the minister; let the minister beware if he disposes of them ill. With the French, M. de Conflans, who lost his fleet through cowardice, is punished by an epigram; here, Admiral Byng, who was too prudent to risk his, was shot. Each in his due position, and according to his power, takes part in business: the mob broke the heads of those who would not drink Dr. Sacheverell's health; gentlemen came in mounted troops to meet him. Some public favourite or enemy is always exciting open demonstrations: Pitt, whom the people cheer, and on whom the corporations bestow many gold boxes; Grenville, whom people go to hiss when coming out of the house; Lord Bute, whom the queen loves, who is hooted, and who is burned under the emblems, a boot and a petticoat; the Duke of Bedford, whose palace is attacked by a mob, and is only saved by a garrison of infantry and horse; Wilkes, whose papers the Government seize, and to whom the jury assign an indemnity of one thousand pounds. Every morning appear journals and pamphlets to discuss affairs, criticise characters, denounce by name lords, orators, ministers, the king himself. He who wants to speak speaks. In this hubbub of writings and associations opinion swells, mounts like a wave, and falling upon Parliament and Court, drowns intrigue and carries

[1] Goldsmith's *Traveller*.

[2] Chesterfield observes that a Frenchman of his time did not understand the word country; you must speak to him of his prince

[3] The executioner of Charles I.

away all differences. After all, in spite of the rotten boroughs, it is opinion which rules. What though the king be obstinate, the men in power band together? Opinion growls, and everything bends or breaks. The Pitts rose as high as they did, only because public opinion raised them, and the independence of the individual ended in the sovereignty of the people.

In such a state, 'all passions being free, hatred, envy, jealousy, the fervour for wealth and distinction, were displayed in all their fulness.'[1] Judge of the force and energy with which eloquence must have been implanted and have flourished. For the first time since the fall of the ancient tribune, it found a soil in which it could take root and live, and a harvest of orators sprang up, equal, in the diversity of their talents, the energy of their convictions, and the magnificence of their style, to that which once covered the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum*. For a long time it seemed that liberty of speech, experience in affairs, the importance of the interests involved, and the greatness of the rewards offered, should have forced its growth; but eloquence came to nothing, encrusted in theological pedantry, or limited in local aims; and the privacy of the parliamentary sittings deprived it of half its force by removing from it the light of day. Now at last there was light; publicity, at first incomplete, then entire, gives Parliament the nation for an audience. Speech is elevated and enlarged at the same time that the public is refined and multiplied. Classical art, become perfect, furnishes method and development. Modern culture introduces into technical reasoning freedom of discourse and a breadth of general ideas. In place of arguing, they conversed; they were attorneys, they became orators. With Addison, Steele, and Swift, taste and genius invade politics. Voltaire cannot say whether the meditated harangues once delivered in Athens and Rome excelled the unpremeditated speeches of Windham, Carteret, and their rivals. In short, discourse succeeds in overcoming the dryness of special questions and the coldness of compassed action, which had so long restricted it; it boldly and irregularly extends its force and luxuriance; and in contrast with the fine abbés of the drawing-room, who in France compose their academical compliments, we see appear the manly eloquence of Junius, Chatham, Fox, Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan.

I need not relate their lives nor unfold their characters; I should have to enter upon political details. Three of them, Lord Chatham, Fox, and Pitt, were ministers,[2] and their eloquence is part of their power and their acts. That eloquence is the concern of those men who may record their political history; I can simply take note of its tone and accent.

[1] Montesquieu, book xix. ch. 27.

[2] Junius wrote anonymously, and critics have not yet been able with certainty, to reveal his true name. Most probably he was Sir Philip Francis For Sheridan, see vol. i. 524. For Burke, see vol. ii. 81.

VIII.

An extraordinary afflatus, a sort of quivering of intense determination, runs through all these speeches. Men speak, and they speak as if they fought. No caution, politeness, restraint. They are unfettered, they abandon themselves, they hurl themselves onward; and if they restrain themselves, it is only that they may strike more pitilessly and more strongly. When the elder Pitt first filled the House with his vibrating voice, he already possessed his indomitable audacity. In vain Walpole tried to 'muzzle him,' then to crush him; his sarcasm was sent back to him with a prodigality of outrages, and the all-powerful minister bent, smitten with the truth of the biting insult which the young man inflicted on him. A proud haughtiness, only surpassed by that of his son, an arrogance which reduced his companions to the rank of subalterns, a Roman patriotism which demanded for England a universal dominion, an ambition lavish of money and men, gave the nation its rapacity and its fire, and only saw rest in far vistas of splendid glory and limitless power, an imagination which brought into Parliament the vehemence and declamation of the stage, the brilliancy of fitful inspiration, the boldness of poetic imagery. Such are the sources of his eloquence:

'But yesterday, and *England* might have stood against the world; now "none so poor to do her reverence."

'We shall be forced ultimately to retract; let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say we must necessarily undo these violent oppressive Acts: they must be repealed—you will repeal them; I pledge myself for it, that you will in the end repeal them; I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed.

'You may swell every expense, and every effort, still more extravagantly pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow; traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince, that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign prince; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent—doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely; for it irritates, to an incurable resentment, the minds of your enemies. To overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder; devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty! If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never!

'But, my Lords, who is the man, that in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the savage? To call into civilised alliance the wild and inhuman savage of the woods; to delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrors of barbarous war against our brethren? My Lords, these enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment; unless thoroughly done away, it will be a stain on the national character—it is a violation of the constitution—I believe it is against law.'[1]

[1] *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, 4th ed., 3 vols., 1794, ii ch. 44, 445.

There is a touch of Milton and Shakspeare in this tragic pomp, in this impassioned solemnity, in the sombre and violent brilliancy of this overstrung and overloaded style. In such superb and blood-like purple are English passions clad, under the folds of such a banner they fall into battle array; the more powerfully that amongst them there is one altogether holy, the sentiment of right, which rallies, occupies, and ennobles them:

'I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest.[1]

'Let the sacredness of their property remain inviolate; let it be taxable only by their own consent given in their provincial assemblies; else it will cease to be property.

'This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America, who prefer with poverty liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence, and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. . . . The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship money in England; the same spirit that called England on its legs, and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English constitution; the same spirit which established the great, fundamental essential maxim of your liberties: that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent.

'As an Englishman by birth and principle, I recognise to the Americans their supreme unalienable right in their property, a right which they are justified in the defence of to the last extremity.'[2]

If Pitt sees his own right, he sees that of others too; it was with this idea that he moved and managed England. For it, he appealed to Englishmen against themselves; and in spite of themselves they recognised their dearest instinct in this maxim, that every human will is inviolable in its limited and legal province, and that it must put forth its whole strength against the slightest usurpation.

Unrestrained passions and the most manly sentiment of right; such is the abstract of all this eloquence. Instead of an orator, a public man, take a writer, a private individual; see the letters of Junius, which, amidst national irritation and anxiety, fell one by one like drops of fire on the fevered limbs of the body politic. If he makes his phrases concise, and selects his epithets, it was not from a love of style, but in order the better to stamp his insult. Oratorical artifices in his hand become instruments of torture, and when he files his periods it was to drive the knife deeper and surer; with what audacity of denunciation, with what sternness of animosity, with what corrosive and burning irony, applied to the most secret corners of private life, with what inexorable persistence of calculated and meditated persecution, the quotations alone will show. He writes to the Duke of Bedford:

'My lord, you are so little accustomed to receive any marks of respect or esteem

[1] *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, ii. ch. 29, 46.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. ch. 42, 398.

from the public, that if, in the following lines, a compliment or expression of applause should escape me, I fear you would consider it as a mockery of your established character, and perhaps an insult to your understanding.'[1]

He writes to the Duke of Grafton:

'There is something in both your character and conduct which distinguishes you not only from all other ministers, but from all other men. It is not that you do wrong by design, but that you should never do right by mistake. It is not that your indolence and your activity have been equally misapplied, but that the first uniform principle, or, if I may call it, the genius of your life, should have carried you through every possible change and contradiction of conduct, without the momentary imputation or colour of a virtue; and that the wildest spirit of inconsistency should never once have betrayed you into a wise or honourable action.'[2]

Junius goes on, fiercer and fiercer; even when he sees the minister fallen and dishonoured, he is still savage. It is vain that he confesses aloud that in the state in which he is, the Duke might 'disarm a private enemy of his resentment.' He grows worse:

'You have every claim to compassion that can arise from misery and distress. The condition you are reduced to would disarm a private enemy of his resentment, and leave no consolation to the most vindictive spirit, but that such an object, as you are, would disgrace the dignity of revenge. . . . For my own part, I do not pretend to understand those prudent forms of decorum, those gentle rules of discretion, which some men endeavour to unite with the conduct of the greatest and most hazardous affairs. . . . I should scorn to provide for a future retreat, or to keep terms with a man who preserves no measures with the public. Neither the abject submission of deserting his post in the hour of danger, nor even the sacred shield of cowardice, should protect him. I would pursue him through life, and try the last exertion of my abilities to preserve the perishable infamy of his name, and make it immortal.'[3]

Except Swift, is there a human being who has more intentionally concentrated and intensified in his heart venom and hatred? Yet this is not vile, for it thinks itself to be in the service of justice. Amidst these excesses, this is the persuasion which enhances them; these men tear one another, but they do not crawl; whoever their enemy be, they take their stand in front of him. Thus Junius addresses the king:

'Sir,—It is the misfortune of your life, and originally the cause of every reproach and distress which has attended your government, that you should never have been acquainted with the language of truth until you heard it in the complaints of your people. It is not, however, too late to correct the error of your education. We are still inclined to make an indulgent allowance for the pernicious lessons you received in your youth, and to form the most sanguine hopes from the natural benevolence of your disposition. We are far from thinking you capable of a direct, deliberate purpose to invade those original rights of your subjects on which all their civil and political liberties depend. Had it been possible for us to entertain a suspicion so dishonourable to your character, we should long since have adopted a style of remonstrance very distant from the humility of complaint. . . . The people of England are loyal to the House of Hanover, not from a vain pre-

[1] Junius' *Letters*, 2 vols., 1772, xxiii. i. 162.
[2] *Ibid.* xii. i. 75.
[3] *Ibid* xxxvi. ii. 56.

ference of one family to another, but from a conviction that the establishment of that family was necessary to the support of their civil and religious liberties. This, Sir, is a principle of allegiance equally solid and rational; fit for Englishmen to adopt, and well worthy of your Majesty's encouragement. We cannot long be deluded by nominal distinctions. The name of Stuart, of itself, is only contemptible: armed with the sovereign authority, their principles are formidable. The prince who imitates their conduct, should be warned by their example; and while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that, as it was acquired by one revolution, it may be lost by another.'[1]

Let us look for less bitter souls, and try to encounter a sweeter accent. There is one man, Charles Fox, happy from his cradle, who learned everything without study, whom his father trained in prodigality and recklessness, whom, from the age of twenty-one, the public voice proclaimed as the first in eloquence and the leader of a great party, liberal, humane, sociable, faithful to these generous expectations, whose very enemies pardoned his faults, whom his friends adored, whom labour never wearied, whom rivals never embittered, whom power did not spoil; a lover of converse, of literature, of pleasure, who has left the impress of his rich genius in the persuasive abundance, in the fine character, the clearness and continuous ease of his speeches. Behold him rising to speak; think of the discretion he must use; he is a statesman, a premier, speaking in Parliament of the friends of the king, lords of the bedchamber, the noblest families of the kingdom, with their allies and connections around him; he knows that each word of his will pierce like a fiery arrow into the heart and honour of five hundred men who sit to hear him. No matter, he has been betrayed; he will punish the traitors, and here is the pillory in which he sets 'the janissaries of the bedchamber,' who by the Prince's order have deserted him in the thick of the fight:

'The whole compass of language affords no terms sufficiently strong and pointed to mark the contempt which I feel for their conduct. It is an impudent avowal of political profligacy, as if that species of treachery were less infamous than any other. It is not only a degradation of a station which ought to be occupied only by the highest and most exemplary honour, but forfeits their claim to the characters of gentlemen, and reduces them to a level with the meanest and the basest of the species; insults the noble, the ancient, and the characteristic independence of the English peerage, and is calculated to traduce and vilify the British legislature in the eyes of all Europe, and to the latest posterity. By what magic nobility can thus charm vice into virtue, I know not nor wish to know; but in any other thing than politics, and among any other men than lords of the bedchamber, such an instance of the grossest perfidy would, as it well deserves, be branded with infamy and execration.'[2]

Then turning to the Commons:

'A Parliament thus fettered and controlled, without spirit and without freedom, instead of limiting, extends, substantiates, and establishes beyond all pre-

[1] Junius' *Letters*, xxxv. ii. 29.

[2] Fox's *Speeches*, 6 vols., 1815, ii, 271; Dec. 17, 1783.

cedent, latitude, or condition, the prerogatives of the crown. But though the British House of Commons were so shamefully lost to its own weight in the constitution, were so unmindful of its former struggles and triumphs in the great cause of liberty and mankind, were so indifferent and treacherous to those primary objects and concerns for which it was originally instituted, I trust the characteristic spirit of this country is still equal to the trial; I trust Englishmen will be as jealous of secret influence as superior to open violence; I trust they are not more ready to defend their interests against foreign depredation and insult, than to encounter and defeat this midnight conspiracy against the constitution.'[1]

Such are the outbursts of a nature above all gentle and amiable; judge of the others. A sort of impassioned exaggeration reigns in the debates to which the trial of Warren Hastings and the French Revolution gave rise, in the acrimonious rhetoric and forced declamation of Sheridan, in the pitiless sarcasm and sententious pomp of the younger Pitt. These orators love the coarse vulgarity of gaudy colours; they hunt out accumulations of big words, contrasts symmetrically protracted, vast and resounding periods. They do not fear to rebuff; they crave effect. Force is their characteristic, and the characteristic of the greatest amongst them, the first mind of the age, Edmund Burke.

He did not enter Parliament, like Pitt and Fox, in the dawn of his youth, but at thirty-five, having had time to train himself thoroughly in all matters, acquainted with law, history, philosophy, literature, master of such a universal erudition, that he has been compared to Bacon. But what distinguished him from all other men was a wide, comprehensive intellect, which, exercised by philosophical studies and writings,[2] seized the general aspects of things, and, beneath text, constitutions, and figures, perceived the invisible tendency of events and the inner spirit, covering with his contempt those pretended statesmen, unfit to stand at the helm of a great state.

Beyond all those gifts, he had one of those fertile and precise imaginations which believe that finished knowledge is an inner view, which never quit a subject without having clothed it in its colours and forms, and which, passing beyond statistics and the rubbish of dry documents, recompose and reconstruct before the reader's eyes a distant country and a foreign nation, with its monuments, dresses, landscapes, and all the shifting detail of its aspects and manners. To all these powers of mind, which constitute a man of system, he added all those energies of heart which constitute an enthusiast. Poor, unknown, having spent his youth in compiling for the publishers, he rose, by dint of work and merits, with a pure reputation and an unscathed conscience, ere the trials of his obscure life or the seductions of his brilliant life had fettered his independence or tarnished the flower of his loyalty. He brought to politics a horror of crime, a vivacity and sincerity of conscience, a humanity, a sensibility, which seem only suitable to a young

[1] Fox's *Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 268.

[2] *An Inquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.*

man He based human society on maxims of morality, demanded the conduct of business for noble sentiments, and seemed to have undertaken to raise and dignify the generosity of the human heart. He had fought nobly for noble causes: against the outrage of power in England, the outrage of the people in France, the outrage of monopolists in India. He had defended, with immense research and unimpeached disinterestedness, the Hindoos tyrannised over by English greed:

'Every man of rank and landed fortune being long since extinguished, the remaining miserable last cultivator who grows to the soil, after having his back scored by the farmer, has it again flayed by the whip of the assignee, and is thus by a ravenous because a short-lived succession of claimants lashed from oppressor to oppressor, whilst a single drop of blood is left as the means of extorting a single grain of corn.'[1]

He made himself everywhere the champion of a principle and the persecutor of a vice; and men saw him bring to the attack all the forces of his wonderful knowledge, his lofty reason, his splendid style, with the unwearying and untempered ardour of a moralist and a knight.

Read him only several pages at a time: only thus he is great; otherwise all that is exaggerated, commonplace, and strange will arrest and shock you; but if you give yourself up to him, you will be carried away and captivated. The vast amount of his works rolls impetuously in a current of eloquence. Sometimes a spoken or written discourse needs a whole volume to unfold the train of his multiplied proofs and courageous anger. It is either the *exposé* of a ministry, or the whole history of British India, or the complete theory of revolutions, and the political conditions, which comes down like a vast, overflowing stream, to dash with its ceaseless effort and accumulated mass against some crime that men would overlook, or some injustice which they would sanction. Doubtless there is foam on its eddies, mud in its bed: thousands of strange creatures sport wildly on its surface: he does not select, he lavishes; he casts forth by myriads his multiplied fancies, emphasis and harsh words, declamations and apostrophes, jests and execrations, the whole grotesque or horrible assemblage of the distant regions and populous cities which his unwearied learning or fancy has traversed. He says, speaking of the usurious loans, at forty-eight per cent. and at compound interest, by which Englishmen had devastated India, that

'That debt forms the foul putrid mucus, in which are engendered the whole brood of creeping ascarides, all the endless involutions, the eternal knot, added to a knot of those inexpugnable tape-worms which devour the nutriment, and eat up the bowels of India.'[2]

Nothing strikes him as in excess, neither the description of tortures, nor the atrocity of his images, nor the deafening racket of his antitheses,

[1] Burke's Works, 1808, 8 vols., iv. 286, *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts*
[2] *Ibid.* 282.

nor the prolonged trumpet-blast of his curses, nor the vast oddity of his jests. To the Duke of Bedford, who had reproached him with his pensions, he answers:

'The grants to the house of Russel were so enormous, as not only to outrage œconomy, but even to stagger credibility. The duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolicks in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood," he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with the spray,—everything of him and about him is from the throne.'[1]

Burke has no taste, nor have his compeers. The fine Greek or French deduction has never found a place among the Germanic nations; with them all is heavy or ill-refined: it is of no use for them to study Cicero, and to confine their dashing force in the orderly dykes of Latin rhetoric. He continues half a barbarian, battening in exaggeration and violence; but his fire is so sustained, his conviction so strong, his emotion so warm and abundant, that we suffer him to go on, forget our repugnance, see in his irregularities and his trespasses only the outpourings of a great heart and a deep mind, too open and too full; and we wonder with a sort of strange veneration at this extraordinary overflow, impetuous as a torrent, broad as a sea, in which the inexhaustible variety of colours and forms undulates beneath the sun of a splendid imagination, which lends to this muddy surge all the brilliancy of its rays.

IX.

If you wish for a comprehensive view of all these personages, study Reynolds,[2] and then look at the fine French portraits of this time, the cheerful ministers, gallant and charming archbishops, Marshal de Saxe, who in the Strasburg monument goes down to his tomb with the taste and ease of a courtier on the staircase at Versailles. Here, under skies drowned in pallid mists, amid soft, vaporous shades, appear expressive or contemplative heads: the rude energy of the character has not awed the artist; the coarse bloated animal; the strange and ominous bird of prey; the growling jaws of the wicked bulldog—he has put them all in: levelling politeness has not in his pictures effaced individual asperities under uniform pleasantness. Beauty is there, but variously: in the cold decision of look, in the deep seriousness and sad nobility of the pale countenance, in the conscientious gravity and the indomitable resolution of the restrained gesture. In place of Lely's courtesans, we see by their side chaste ladies, sometimes severe and active; good mothers surrounded by their little ones, who kiss them

[1] Burke's Works, viii. 35; *A Letter to a Noble Lord.*

[2] Lord Heathfield, the Earl of Mansfield, Major Stringer Lawrence, Lord Ashburton, Lord Edgecombe, etc.

and embrace one another: morality is here, and with it the sentiment of home and family, propriety of dress, a pensive air, the correct deportment of Miss Burney's heroines. They have succeeded: Bakewell transforms and reforms their cattle; Arthur Young their agriculture; Howard their prisons; Arkwright and Watt their industry; Adam Smith their political economy; Bentham their penal law; Locke, Hutcheson, Ferguson, Joseph Butler, Reid, Stewart, Price, their psychology and their morality. They have purified their private manners, they now purify their public manners. They have settled their government, they have confirmed themselves in their religion. Johnson is able to say with truth, that no nation in the world better tills its soil and its mind. There is none so rich, so free, so well nourished, where public and private efforts are directed with such assiduity, energy, and ability towards the improvement of public and private condition. One point alone is wanting: lofty speculation. It is just this point which, for lack of the rest, constitutes at this moment the glory of France; and English caricatures show, with a good appreciation of burlesque, face to face and in strange contrast, on one side the Frenchman in a tumble-down cottage, shivering, with long teeth, thin, feeding on snails and a handful of roots, but otherwise charmed with his lot, consoled by a republican cockade and humanitarian programmes; on the other, the Englishman, red and puffed out with fat, seated at his table in a comfortable room, before a dish of most juicy roast-beef, with a pot of foaming ale, busy in grumbling against the public distress and the traitorous ministers, who are going to ruin everything.

Thus Englishmen arrive on the threshold of the French Revolution, Conservatives and Christians facing the French free-thinkers and revolutionaries. Without knowing it, the two nations have rolled onwards for two centuries towards this terrible shock; without knowing it, they have only been working to aggravate it. All their effort, all their ideas, all their great men have accelerated the motion which hurls them towards the inevitable conflict. Hundred and fifty years of politeness and general ideas have persuaded the French to trust in human goodness and pure reason. Hundred and fifty years of moral reflection and political strife have attached the Englishman to positive religion and an established constitution. Each has his contrary dogma and his contrary enthusiasm. Neither understands the other, and each detests the other. What one calls renovation, the other calls destruction; what one reveres as the establishment of right, the other curses as the overthrow of right; what seems to one the annihilation of superstition, seems to the other the abolition of morality. Never was the contrast of two spirits and two civilisations marked in more manifest characters; and it was Burke who, with the superiority of a thinker and the hostility of an Englishman, took it in hand to show this to the French.

He is indignant at this 'tragi-comick farce,' which at Paris was called the regeneration of humanity. He denies that the contagion of

such folly can ever poison England. He laughs at the Cockneys, who, roused by the pratings of democratic societies, think themselves on the brink of a revolution:

'Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.'[1]

Real England hates and detests the maxims and actions of the French Revolution:[2]

'The very idea of the fabrication of a new government, is enough to fill us with disgust and horror. We wished . . . to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers. . . . (We claim) our franchises not as the rights of men, but as the rights of Englishmen.'[3]

Our rights do not float in the air, in the imagination of philosophers; they are put down in Magna Charta:

'We have not been drawn and trussed, in order that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags and paltry blurred shreds of paper about the rights of men.'[4]

We despise this abstract verbiage, which deprives man of all equity and respect to puff him up with presumption and theories. Our constitution is not a fictitious contract, like that of Rousseau, sure to be violated in three months, but a real contract, by which king, nobles, people, church, every one holds the others, and is himself held. The crown of the prince and the privilege of the noble are as sacred as the land of the peasant and the tool of the workman. Whatever be the acquisition or the inheritance, we respect it in every man, and our law has but one object, which is, to preserve to each his property and his rights.

'We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility.'[5]

'There is not one public man in this kingdom who does not reprobate the dishonest, perfidious, and cruel confiscation which the National Assembly has been compelled to make. . . . Church and State are ideas inseparable in our minds. . . . Our education is in a manner wholly in the hands of ecclesiasticks, and in all stages, from infancy to manhood. . . . They never will suffer the fixed estate of the church to be converted into a pension, to depend on the treasury. . . . They made their church like their nobility, independent. They can see without pain or grudging an archbishop precede a duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham or a Bishop of Winchester in possession of ten thousand a year.'[6]

[1] E. Burke's Works, v. 165; *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

[2] 'I almost venture to affirm that not one in a hundred among us participates in the triumph of the revolution society.'—Burke's *Reflections*, v. 165.

[3] *Ibid.* 75. [4] *Ibid.* 166. [5] *Ibid.* 167. [6] *Ibid.* 188.

We will never suffer the established domain of our church to be converted into a pension, so as to place it in dependence on the treasury. We have made our church as our king and our nobility, independent. We are shocked at your robbery—first, because it is an outrage upon property; next, because it is an attack against religion. We hold that there exists no society without belief, and we feel that, in exhausting the source, you dry up the whole stream. We have rejected as a poison the infidelity which defiled the beginning of our century and of yours, and we have purged ourselves of it, whilst you have been saturated.

'Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, . . . and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers?'[1]

'We are Protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal.

'Atheism is against not only our reason, but our instincts.

'We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater.'[2]

We settle our establishment upon the sentiment of right, and the sentiment of right on the respect for God.

In place of right and of God, what do you acknowledge as master? The sovereign people, that is, the arbitrary inconstancy of a counted majority. We deny that the majority has a right to re-create a constitution.

'The constitution of a country being once settled upon some compact, tacit or expressed, there is no power existing of force to alter it, without the breach of the covenant, or the consent of all the parties.'[3]

We deny that the majority has the right to make a constitution; unanimity must first have conferred this right on the majority. We deny that brute force is a legitimate authority, and that a populace is a nation.[4]

'A true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state or separable from it. . . . When great multitudes act together under that discipline of nature, I recognise the people; . . . when you separate the common sort of men from their proper chieftains so as to form them into an adverse army, I no longer know that venerable object called the people in such a disbanded race of deserters and vagabonds.'[5]

We detest with all our power of hatred the right of tyranny which you give them over others, and we detest still more the right of insur-

[1] Burke's Works, v. 172; *Reflections.*

[2] *Ibid.* 175.

[3] *Ibid.* vi. 201; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

[4] 'A government of five hundred country attornies and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four millions of men, though it were chosen by eight and forty millions. . . . As to the share of power, authority, direction, which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society.'—Burke's Works, v. 109; *Reflections.*

[5] Burke's Works, vi. 219; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*

rection which you give them against themselves. We believe that a constitution is a deposit transmitted to this generation by the past, to be handed down to the future, and that if a generation can dispose of it as its own, it ought also to respect it as belonging to others. We hold that, 'by this unprincipled facility of changing the state as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies and fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer.'[1] We repudiate this meagre and coarse reason, which separates a man from his ties, and sees in him only the present, which separates a man from society, and counts him as only one head in a flock. We despise these 'metaphysics of an undergraduate and the mathematics of an exciseman,' by which you cut up the state and man's rights according to square miles and numerical unities. We have a horror of that cynical coarseness by which 'all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off,' by which 'now a queen is but a woman, and a woman is but an animal,'[2] which cuts down chivalric and religious spirit, the two crowns of humanity, to plunge them, together with learning, into the popular mire, to be 'trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.'[3] We have a horror of this systematic levelling which disorganises civil society. Burke continues thus:

'I am satisfied beyond a doubt that the project of turning a great empire into a vestry, or into a collection of vestries, and of governing it in the spirit of a parochial administration, is senseless and absurd, in any mode, or with any qualifications. I can never be convinced, that the scheme of placing the highest powers of the state in churchwardens and constables, and other such officers, guided by the prudence of litigious attornies, and Jew brokers, and set in action by shameless women of the lowest condition, by keepers of hotels, taverns and brothels, by pert apprentices, by clerks, shop-boys, hairdressers, fiddlers, and dancers on the stage (who, in such a commonwealth as yours, will in future overbear, as already they have overborne, the sober incapacity of dull uninstructed men, of useful but laborious occupations), can never be put into any shape that must not be both disgraceful and destructive.'[4] 'If monarchy should ever obtain an entire ascendency in France, it will probably be . . . the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth. France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors in assignats, . . . attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people.'[5]

This is what Burke wrote in 1790 to the dawn of the French Revolution.[6] The year after the people of Birmingham destroyed the

[1] Burke's Works, v. 181; *Reflections.* [2] *Ibid.* 151. [3] *Ibid.* 154.
[4] *Ibid.* vi. 5; *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.*
[5] *Ibid.* v. 349; *Reflections.*
[6] 'The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risk congratulations which

houses of English Jacobins, and the miners of Wednesbury went out in a body from their pits to come to the succour of 'king and church.' Crusade against crusade; scared England was as fanatical as enthusiastic France. Pitt declared that they could not 'treat with a nation of atheists.'[1] Burke said that the war was not between people and people, but between property and brute force. The rage of execration, invective, and destruction mounted on both sides like a conflagration.[2] It was not the collision of the two governments, but of the two civilisations and the two doctrines. The two vast machines, driven with all their momentum and velocity, met face to face, not by chance, but by fatality. A whole age of literature and philosophy had been necessary to amass the fuel which filled their sides, and laid down the rail which guided their course. In this thundering clash, amid these ebullitions of hissing and fiery vapour, in these red flames which grated around the boilers, and whirled with a rumbling noise upwards to the heavens, an attentive spectator may still discover the nature and the accumulation of the force which caused such an outburst, dislocated such iron plates, and strewed the ground with such ruins.

may be soon turned into complaints. . . . Strange chaos of levity and ferocity, . . . monstrous tragi-comick scene. . . . After I have read the list of the persons and descriptions elected into the Tiers-Etat, nothing which they afterwards did could appear astonishing. . . . Of any practical experience in the state, not one man was to be found. The best were only men of theory. The majority was composed of practitioners in the law, . . . active chicaners, . . . obscure provincial advocates, stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attornies, notaries, etc.' —Burke's *Reflections*, etc., v. 37 and 90. That which offends Burke, and even makes him very uneasy, was, that no representatives of the 'natural landed interests' were among the representatives of the *Tiers-Etat*. Let us give one quotation more, for really this political clairvoyance is akin to genius: 'Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.'

[1] Pitt's *Speeches*, 3 vols., 1808, ii. p. 81, on negotiating for peace with France, Jan. 26, 1795. Pitt says, however, in the same speech: 'God forbid that we should look on the body of the people of France as atheists.'—TR.

[2] *Letters to a Noble Lord; Letters on a Regicide Peace.*

CHAPTER IV.

Addison.

I. **Addison and Swift in their epoch**—Wherein they are alike and **unlike**.

II. **The man**—Education and culture—**Latin verses**—Voyage in **France and** Italy—*Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax*—*Remarks on Italy*—*Dialogues on Medals*—*Campaign*—Gentleness **and kindness**—Success **and** happiness.

III. Gravity and rationality—Solid studies and exact observation—His knowledge of men and business habits—Nobility of his character and conduct—Elevation of his morality and religion—How his life and character have contributed to the pleasantness and usefulness of his writings.

IV. The moralist—His essays are all moral—Against gross, sensual, or worldly life—This morality is practical, and yet commonplace and desultory—How it relies on reason and calculation—How it has for its end satisfaction in this world and happiness in the other—Speculative meanness of his religious conception—Practical excellence of his religious conception.

V. The writer—Harmony of morality and elegance—The style that suits men of the world—Merits of this style—Inconveniences—Addison as a critic—His judgment of *Paradise Lost*—Agreement of his art and criticism—Limits of classical criticism and art—What is lacking in the eloquence of Addison, of the Englishman and of the moralist.

VI. Grave pleasantry—Humour—Serious and fertile imagination—*Sir Roger de Coverley*—The religious and the poetical sentiment—*Vision of Mirza*—How the Germanic element subsists under Latin culture.

I.

IN this vast transformation of the minds which occupies the whole eighteenth century, and gives England its political and moral standing, two superior men appear in politics and morality, both accomplished writers—the most accomplished yet seen in England; both accredited mouthpieces of a party, masters in the art of persuasion and conviction; both limited in philosophy and art, incapable of considering sentiments in a disinterested fashion; always bent on seeing the motives of things, for approbation or blame; otherwise differing, and even in contrast with one another: one happy, kind, loved; the other hated, hating, and most unfortunate: the one a partisan of liberty and the noblest hopes of man; the other an advocate of a retrograde party, and an eager detractor of humanity: the one measured, delicate, furnishing a model of the most solid English qualities, perfected by continental culture; the other unbridled and formidable, showing an example of

the harshest English instincts, luxuriating without limit or rule in every kind of devastation and amid every degree of despair. To penetrate to the interior of this civilisation and this people, there are no means better than to pause and dwell upon Swift and Addison.

II.

'I have often reflected,' says Steele, 'after a night spent with him (Addison), apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humour, more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed.'[1] And Pope, a rival of Addison, and a bitter rival, adds: 'His conversation had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man.'[2] These sayings express the whole talent of Addison: his writings are conversations, masterpieces of English urbanity and reason; nearly all the details of his character and life have contributed to nourish this urbanity and this reasonableness.

At the age of seventeen we find him at Oxford, studious and peaceful, loving solitary walks under the elm avenues, and amongst the beautiful meadows on the banks of the Cherwell. From the thorny brake of school education he chose the only flower—a withered one, doubtless, Latin verse—but one which, compared to the erudition, to the theology, to the logic of the time, is still a flower. He celebrates, in strophes or hexameters, the peace of Ryswick, or the system of Dr. Burnett; he composes little ingenious poems on a puppet-show, on the battle of the pigmies and cranes; he learns to praise and jest—in Latin, it is true—but with such success, that his verses recommend him for the rewards of the ministry, and even reach Boileau. At the same time he imbues himself with the Latin poets; he knows them by heart, even the most affected, Claudian and Prudentius; presently in Italy quotations will rain from his pen; from top to bottom, in all its nooks and under all its aspects, his memory is stuffed with Latin verses. We see that he loves them, scans them with delight, that a fine cæsura charms him, that every delicacy touches him, that no hue of art or emotion escapes him, that his literary tact is refined, and prepared to relish all the beauties of thought and expression. This inclination, too long retained, is a sign of a little mind, I allow; a man ought not to spend so much time in inventing cantos. Addison would have done better to enlarge his knowledge—to study Latin prose-writers, Greek literature, Christian antiquity, modern Italy, which he hardly knew. But this limited culture, leaving him weaker, made him more refined. He formed his art by studying only the monuments of Latin urbanity; he acquired a taste for the elegance and refinements, the triumphs and

[1] Addison's Works, ed. Hurd, 6 vols., v. 151; Steele's Letter to Mr Congreve
[2] *Ibid.* vi. 729.

artifices of style; he became self-contemplative, correct, capable of knowing and perfecting his own tongue. In the designed reminiscences, the happy allusions, the discreet tone of his own little poems, I find beforehand many traits of the *Spectator*.

Leaving the university, he travelled long in the two most polished countries in the world, France and Italy. He lived at Paris, in the house of the ambassador, in the regular and brilliant society which gave fashion to Europe; he visited Boileau, Malebranche; saw with somewhat malicious curiosity the fine curtsies of the painted and affected ladies of Versailles, the grace and almost stale civilities of the fine speakers and fine dancers of the other sex. He was amused at our complimentary intercourse, and remarked that in France, when a tailor accosted a shoemaker, he congratulated himself on the honour of saluting him. In Italy he admired the works of art, and praised them in a letter,[1] whose enthusiasm is rather cold, but very well expressed.[2] You see that he had the fine training which is now given to young men of the higher ranks. And it was not the amusements of Cockneys or the worry of taverns which employed him. His beloved Latin poets followed him everywhere. He had read them over before setting out; he recited their verses in the places which he mentions.

'I must confess, it was not one of the least entertainments that I met with in travelling, to examine these several descriptions, as it were, upon the spot, and to compare the natural face of the country with the landscapes that the poets have given us of it.'[3]

These were the pleasures of an epicure in literature; there could be nothing more literary and less pedantic than the account which he wrote on his return.[4] Presently this refined and delicate curiosity led him to coins. 'There is a great affinity,' he says, 'between them and poetry;' for they serve as a commentary upon ancient authors; an effigy of the Graces makes a verse of Horace visible. And on this subject he wrote a very agreeable dialogue, choosing for personages well-bred men:

'All three very well versed in the politer parts of learning, and had travelled into the most refined nations of Europe. . . . Their design was to pass away the heat of the summer among the fresh breezes that rise from the river (the Thames), and the agreeable mixture of shades and fountains in which the whole country naturally abounds.'[5]

[1] A Letter to Lord Halifax (1701), i. 29.

[2] 'Renowned in verse, each shady thicket grows,
And every stream in heavenly numbers flows. . . .
Where the smooth chisel all its force has shown.
And softened into flesh the rugged stone. . . .
Here pleasing airs my ravisht soul confound
With circling notes and labyrinths of sound.'—*Ibid.*

[3] Preface to *Remarks on Italy*, i. 358.

[4] *Remarks on Italy*

[5] *First Dialogue on Medals*, i. 255.

Then, with a gentle and well-tempered gaiety, he laughs at pedants who waste life in discussing the Latin toga or sandal, but pointed out, like a man of taste and wit, the services which coins might render to history and the arts. Was there ever a better education for a literary man of the world? He had already for a long time acquired the art of fashionable poetry, I mean the correct verses, which are complimentary, or written to order. In all polished society we look for the adornment of thought; we desire for it rare, brilliant, beautiful dress, to distinguish it from vulgar thoughts, and for this reason we impose upon it rhyme, metre, noble expression; we make for it a store of select terms, true metaphors, suitable images, which are like an aristocratic wardrobe, in which it is hampered but must adorn itself. Men of wit are bound to make verses for it, and in a certain style; others to display their lace, and after a certain pattern. Addison put on this dress, and wore it correctly and easily, passing without difficulty from one habit to another similar, from Latin to English verse. His principal piece, *The Campaign*,[1] is an excellent model of becoming and classical style. Each verse is full, perfect in itself, with a clever antithesis, or a good epithet, or a figure of abbreviation. Countries have noble names; Italy is Ausonia, the Black Sea is the Scythian Sea; there are mountains of dead, and a thunder of eloquence sanctioned by Lucian; pretty turns of oratorical address imitated from Ovid; cannons are mentioned in poetic periphrases as later in Delille.[2] The poem is an official and decorative amplification, like that which Voltaire wrote afterwards on Fontenoy. Addison does yet better; he wrote an opera, a comedy, a much admired tragedy on the death of Cato. Such writing was always, in the last century, a passport to employ good style and to enter fashionable society. A young man in Voltaire's time, on leaving college, had to write his tragedy, as now he must write an article on political economy; it was then a proof that he could converse with ladies, as now it is a proof that he can argue with men. He learned the art of being amusing, of touching, of talking of love; he thus escaped from dry or special studies; he could choose among events or sentiments those which will interest or please; he was able to hold his own in good company, to be sometimes agreeable there, never to transgress. Such is the culture which these works gave Addison; it is of slight import.

[1] On the victory of Blenheim.

[2] 'With floods of gore . . . the rivers swell. . . .
Mountains of dead.
Rows of hollow brass
Tube behind tube the dreadful entrance keep,
Whilst in their wombs ten thousand thunders sleep. . . .
. . . Here shattered walls, like broken rocks, from far
Rise up in hideous views, the guilt of war;
Whilst here the vine o'er hills of ruin climbs
Industrious to conceal great Bourbon's crimes.'

ance that they are poor. In them he dealt with passions, humour; he produced in his opera some lively and smiling images; in his tragedy some noble or moving accents; he emerged from reasoning and pure dissertation; he acquired the art of rendering morality visible and truth expressive; he knew how to give ideas a physiognomy, and that an attractive one. Thus was the finished writer perfected by contact with ancient and modern, foreign and national urbanity, by the sight of the fine arts, by experience of the world and study of style, by continuous and delicate choice of all that is agreeable in things and men, in life and art.

His politeness received from his character a singular bent and charm. It was not external, simply voluntary and official; it came from the heart. He was gentle and kind, of a refined sensibility, so timid even as to remain quiet and seem dull in a numerous company or before strangers, only recovering his spirits before intimate friends, and confessing that he could not talk well to more than one. He could not endure a sharp discussion; when the opponent was intractable, he pretended to approve, and for punishment, plunged him discreetly into his own folly. He withdrew by preference from political arguments; being invited to deal with them in the *Spectator*, he contented himself with inoffensive and general subjects, which could interest all whilst shocking none. He would have suffered in making others suffer. Though a very decided and faithful Whig, he continued moderate in polemics; and in a time when conquerors legally attempted to assassinate or ruin the conquered, he confined himself to show the faults of argument made by the Tories, or to rail courteously at their prejudices. At Dublin he went first of all to shake the hand of Swift, his great and fallen adversary. Insulted bitterly by Dennis and Pope, he refused to employ against them his influence or his wit, and praised Pope to the end. What could be more touching, when we have read his life, than his essay on kindness? we perceive that he is unconsciously speaking of himself:

'There is no society or conversation to be kept up in the world without good-nature, or something which must bear its appearance, and supply its place. For this reason mankind have been forced to invent a kind of artificial humanity, which is what we express by the word good-breeding. . . . The greatest wits I have conversed with are men eminent for their humanity. . . . Good-nature is generally born with us; health, prosperity, and kind treatment from the world are great cherishers of it where they find it.'[1]

It so happens that he is involuntarily describing his own charm and his own success. It is himself that he is unveiling; he was very prosperous, and his good fortune spread itself around him in affectionate sentiments, in constant discretion, in calm cheerfulness. At college he was distinguished; his Latin verses made him a fellow at Oxford; he

[1] *Spectator*, No. 169.

spent ten years there in grave amusements and the studies which pleased him. From the age of twenty-two, Dryden, the prince of literature, praised him splendidly. When he left Oxford, the ministers gave him a pension of three hundred pounds to finish his education, and prepare him for public service. On his return from his travels, his poem on Blenheim placed him in the first rank of the Whigs. He became a member of Parliament, twice Secretary for Ireland, Under-Secretary of State, Secretary of State. Party hatred spared him; amid the almost universal defeat of the Whigs, he was re-elected; in the furious war of Whigs and Tories, both united to applaud his tragedy of *Cato;* the most cruel pamphleteers respected him; his uprightness, his talent, seemed exalted by common consent above discussion. He lived in abundance, activity, and honours, wisely and usefully, amid the assiduous admiration and constant affection of learned and distinguished friends, who could never have too much of his conversation, amid the applause of all the good men and all the cultivated minds of England. If twice the fall of his party seemed to destroy or retard his fortune, he maintained his position without much effort, by reflection and coolness, prepared for all that might happen, accepting mediocrity, confirmed in a natural and acquired calmness, accommodating himself without yielding to men, respectful to the great without degrading himself, free from secret revolt or internal suffering. These are the sources of his talent; could any be purer or finer? could anything be more engaging than worldly polish and elegance, without the factitious ardour and the complimentary falseness of the world? And will you look for a more amiable conversation than that of a good and happy man, whose knowledge, taste, and wit are only employed to give you pleasure?

III.

This pleasure will be useful to you. Your interlocutor is as grave as he is polite; he would and can instruct as well as amuse you; his education has been as solid as it has been elegant; he even confesses in the *Spectator* that he prefers the serious to the funny style. He is naturally reflective, silent, attentive. He has studied literature, men, and things, with the conscientiousness of a scholar and an observer. When he travelled in Italy, it was in the English style, noting the difference of manners, the peculiarities of the soil, the good and ill effects of various governments; storing himself with concise reminiscences, circumstantial mementoes on taxes, buildings, minerals, atmosphere, harbours, administration, and I cannot say how many other things.[1] An English lord, who travels in Holland, goes simply into a cheese-shop, in order to see for himself all the stages of the manufacture; he returns, like Addison, provided with exact statistics, complete notes: this mass of verified information is the foundation of the common sense of English-

[1] See, for instance, his chapter on the Republic of San Marino.

men. Addison added to it experience of business, having been successively, or at the same time, a journalist, a member of Parliament, a statesman, hand and heart in all the fights and chances of party. Mere literary education only makes good talkers, able to adorn and publish ideas which they do not possess, and which others furnish for them. If writers wish to invent, they must look to events and men, not to books and drawing-rooms; the conversation of special men is more useful to them than the study of perfect periods; they cannot think for themselves, but in so far as they have lived or acted. Addison knew how to act and live. When we read his reports, letters, and discussions, we feel that politics and government have given him half his mind. To exercise patronage, to handle money, to interpret the law, to divine the motives of men, to foresee the changes of public opinion, to be compelled to judge rightly, quickly, and twenty times a day, on present and great interests, under the inspection of the public and the espionnage of enemies; all this nourished his reason and sustained his discourses. Such a man might judge and counsel his fellows; his judgments were not amplifications arranged by a process of the brain, but observations controlled by experience: he might be listened to on moral subjects as a physician was on physical subjects; we could feel that he spoke with authority, and that we were instructed.

After having listened a little, people felt themselves better; for they recognised in him from the first a singularly elevated soul, very pure, so much attached to uprightness that he made it his constant and his dearest pleasure. He naturally loved beauty, kindness and justice, science and liberty. From an early age he had joined the Liberal party, and he continued in it to the end, hoping the best of human virtue and reason, noting the wretchedness into which people fell who abandoned their dignity with their independence.[1] He followed the lofty discoveries of the new physical sciences, so as to raise still more the idea which he had of God's work. He loved the deep and serious emotions which reveal to us the nobility of our nature and the infirmity of our condition. He employed his talent and all his writings in giving us the notion of what we are worth, and of what we are to be. Of two

[1] Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax:

'O Liberty, thou Goddess heavenly bright,
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling plenty leads thy wanton train. . . .
'Tis liberty that crowns Britannia's isle,
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains smile.'

About the Republic of San Marino he writes:

'Nothing can be a greater instance of the natural love that mankind has for liberty, and of their aversion to an arbitrary government, than such a savage mountain covered with people, and the Campania of Rome, which lies in the same country, almost destitute of inhabitants.'—*Remarks on Italy* i. 406.

tragedies which he composed or contemplated, one was on the death of Cato, the most virtuous of the Romans; the other on that of Socrates, the most virtuous of the Greeks. At the end of the first he felt some scruples; and for fear of excusing suicide, he gave Cato some remorse. His opera of *Rosamond* was finished with the injunction to prefer pure love to forbidden joys; the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Guardian*, are mere lay sermons. Moreover, he practised his maxims. When he was in office, his integrity was perfect; he served men—often those whom he did not know—always gratuitously, refusing even disguised presents. When out of office, his loyalty was perfect; he maintained his opinions and friendships without bitterness or baseness, boldly praising his fallen protectors,[1] fearing not thereby to expose himself to the loss of his only remaining resources. He was naturally noble, and he was so rationally. He considered that there is common sense in honesty. His first care, as he said, was to range his passions on the side of truth. He had made for himself a portrait of a rational creature, and he made his conduct conformable to this by reflection as much as by instinct. He rested every virtue on an order of principles and proofs. His logic fed his morality, and the uprightness of his mind carried out the justice of his heart. His religion, English in every sense, was after the like fashion. He rested his faith on a regular succession of historical discussions:[2] he established the existence of God by a regular succession of moral deductions; minute and solid demonstration was throughout the guide and author of his beliefs and emotions. Thus disposed, he loved to conceive God as the rational head of the world; he transformed accidents and necessities into calculations and directions; he saw order and providence in the conflict of things, and felt around him the wisdom which he attempted to establish in himself. He trusted in God as a good and just being, who felt himself in the hands of a good and just being. He lived willingly in his knowledge and presence, and thought of the unknown future which was to complete human nature and accomplish moral order. When the end came, he went over his life, and discovered that he had done some wrong or other to Gay: this wrong was doubtless slight, since Gay had no suspicion of it. Addison begged him to come to his bedside, and asked his pardon. When he was about to die, he wished still to be useful, and sent for his son-in-law, Lord Warwick, whose levity had disturbed him more than once. He was so weak that at first he could not speak. The young man, after waiting a while, said to him: 'Dear Sir, you sent for me, I believe; I hope that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred.' The dying man with an effort pressed his hand, and replied gently: 'See in what peace a Christian can die.'[3] Shortly afterwards he expired.

[1] Halifax, for instance.

[2] *Of the Christian Religion.*

[3] Addison's Works, vi. 525.

IV.

'The great and only end of these speculations,' says Addison, in a number of the *Spectator*, 'is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain.' And he kept his word. His papers are wholly moral—advice to families, reprimands to thoughtless women, a portrait of an honest man, remedies for the passions, reflections on God, the future life. I hardly know, or rather I know very well, what success a newspaper full of sermons would have in France. In England it was extraordinary, equal to that of the most fortunate modern novelists. In the general disaster of the reviews, ruined by the Stamp Act, the *Spectator* doubled its price, and held its ground. This was because it offered to Englishmen the picture of English reason: the talent and the teaching were in harmony with the needs of the age and of the country. Let us endeavour to describe this reason, which was gradually eliminated from Puritanism and its rigidity, from the Restoration and its excess. The mind attained its balance together with religion and the state. It conceived the rule, and disciplined its conduct; it diverged from a life of excess, and confirmed itself in a sensible life; it shunned physical and prescribed moral existence. Addison rejects with scorn gross corporeal pleasure, the brutal joy of noise and motion:

'I would nevertheless leave to the consideration of those who are the patrons of this monstrous trial of skill, whether or no they are not guilty, in some measure, of an affront to their species, in treating after this manner the human face divine.'[1]

'Is it possible that human nature can rejoice in its disgrace, and take pleasure in seeing its own figure turned to ridicule, and distorted into forms that raise horror and aversion? There is something disingenuous and immoral in the being able to bear such a sight.'[2]

Of course he sets himself against licence without artlessness and the systematic debauchery which was the taste and the shame of the Restoration. He wrote whole articles against young fashionable men, 'a sort of vermin' who fill London with their bastards; against professional seducers, who are the 'knights-errant' of vice.

'When men of rank and figure pass away their lives in these criminal pursuits and practices, they ought to consider that they render themselves more vile and despicable than any innocent man can be, whatever low station his fortune or birth have placed him in.'[3]

He severely jeers at women who expose themselves to temptations, and whom he calls 'salamanders:'

'A salamander is a kind of heroine in chastity, that treads upon fire, and lives in the midst of flames without being hurt. A salamander knows no distinction of sex in those she converses with, grows familiar with a stranger at first sight, and is not so narrow-spirited as to observe whether the person she talks to be in breeches

[1] *Spectator*, No. 173. [2] *Tatler*, No. 108. [3] *Guardian*, No. 123.

or petticoats. She admits a male visitant to her bedside, plays with him a whole afternoon at picquet, walks with him two or three hours by moonlight.'[1]

He fights like a preacher against the fashion of low dresses, and gravely demands the tucker and modesty of old times:

'To prevent these saucy familiar glances, I would entreat my gentle readers to sew on their tuckers again, to retrieve the modesty of their characters, and not to imitate the nakedness, but the innocence, of their mother Eve. In short, modesty gives the maid greater beauty than even the bloom of youth; it bestows on the wife the dignity of a matron, and reinstates the widow in her virginity.'[2]

You will find, further on, lectures on the masquerades, which end with a rendezvous; precepts on the number of glasses people might drink, and the dishes of which they might eat; condemnations of licentious professors of irreligion and immorality; all maxims now somewhat stale, but then new and useful, because Wycherley and Rochester had put the opposite maxims into use and credit. Debauchery passed for French and fashionable: this is why Addison proscribes in addition all French frivolities. He laughs at women who receive visitors in their dressing-rooms, and speak aloud at the theatre:

'There is nothing which exposes a woman to greater dangers, than that gaiety and airiness of temper, which are natural to most of the sex. It should be therefore the concern of every wise and virtuous woman to keep this sprightliness from degenerating into levity. On the contrary, the whole discourse and behaviour of the French is to make the sex more fantastical, or (as they are pleased to term it) more awakened, than is consistent either with virtue or discretion.'[3]

You see already in these strictures the portrait of the sensible housewife, the modest English wife, domestic and grave, taken up with her husband and children. Addison returns a score of times to the artifices, the pretty affected babyisms, the coquetry, the futilities of women. He cannot suffer languishing or lazy habits. He is full of epigrams, written against flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits.[4] He writes a satirical journal of a man who goes to his club, learns the news, yawns, studies the barometer, and thinks his time well occupied. He considers that our time is a capital, our business a duty, and our life a task.

Only a task. If he holds himself superior to sensual life, he is inferior to philosophical life. His morality, thoroughly English, always crawls among commonplaces, discovering no principles, making no deductions. The fine and lofty aspects of the mind are wanting. He gives inimitable advice, a clear watchword, justified by what happened yesterday, useful for to-morrow. He observes that fathers must not be inflexible, and that they often repent driving their children to despair. He finds that bad books are pernicious, because their endurance carries their poison to future ages. He consoles a woman

[1] *Spectator*, No. 198.
[2] *Spectator*, No. 45.
[3] *Guardian*, No. 100.
[4] *Ibid.* Nos. 317 and 323

who has lost her sweetheart, by showing her the misfortunes of so many other people who are suffering the greatest evils at the same time. His *Spectator* is only an honest man's manual, and is often like the *Complete Lawyer*. It is practical, its aim being not to amuse, but to correct us. The conscientious Protestant, nourished with dissertations and morality, demands an effectual monitor and guide; he would like his reading to influence his conduct, and his newspaper to suggest a resolution. To this end Addison seeks motives everywhere He thinks of the future life, but does not forget the present; he rests virtue on interest, rightly understood. He strains no principle to its limits; he accepts them all, as they are to be met with in the human domain, according to their manifest goodness, tracing only the primary consequences, shunning the powerful logical pressure which spoils all by expressing too much See him establishing a maxim, recommending constancy for instance; his motives are mixed and incongruous: first, inconstancy exposes us to scorn; next, it puts us in continual distraction; again, it hinders us as a rule from attaining our end; moreover, it is the great feature of every human and mortal being; finally, it is most opposed to the inflexible nature of God, who ought to be our model. The whole is illustrated at the close by a quotation from Dryden and a verse from Horace. This medley and jumble describe the ordinary mind which remains on the level of its audience, and the practical mind, which knows how to dominate over its audience. Addison persuades the public, because he draws from the public sources of belief. He is powerful because he is vulgar, and useful because he is narrow.

Picture now this mind, so characteristically mediocre, limited to the discovery of good motives of action. What a reflective man, always equal and dignified! What a store he has of resolutions and maxims! All rapture, instinct, inspiration, and caprice, are abolished or disciplined. No case surprises or carries him away. He is always ready and protected; so much so, that he is like an automaton. Argument has frozen and invaded him. See, for instance, how he puts us on our guard against involuntary hypocrisy, announcing, explaining, distinguishing the ordinary and extraordinary modes, dragging on with exordiums, preparations, methods, allusions to Scripture.[1] After six lines of this morality, a Frenchman would go out for a mouthful of fresh air. What in the name of heaven would he do, if, in order to move him to piety, he was told[2] that God's omniscience and omnipresence furnished us with three kinds of motives, and then subdivided these motives into first, second, and third? To put calculation at every stage; to come with weight and figures into the thick of human passions, to ticket them, classify them like bales, to tell the public that the inventory is complete; to lead them, with the reckoning in their hand, and by the mere virtue of statistics, to honour and duty,—such is

[1] *Spectator*, No. 399. [2] *Ibid.* No. 571.

the morality of Addison and of England. It is a sort of commercial common sense applied to the interests of the soul; a preacher here is only an economist in a white tie, who treats conscience like food, and refutes vice as a set of prohibitions.

There is nothing sublime or chimerical in the end which he sets before us; all is practical, that is, business-like and sensible: the question is, How 'to be easy here and happy afterwards.' To be easy is a word which has no French equivalent, meaning that comfortable state of the mind, a means of calm satisfaction, approved action and serene conscience. Addison makes it consist in labour and manly functions, carefully and regularly discharged. We must see with what complacency he paints in the *Freeholder* and *Sir Roger* the grave pleasures of a citizen and proprietor:

'I have rather chosen this title (the Freeholder) than any other, because it is what I most glory in, and what most effectually calls to my mind the happiness of that government under which I live. As a British freeholder, I should not scruple taking place of a French marquis; and when I see one of my countrymen amusing himself in his little cabbage-garden, I naturally look upon him as a greater person than the owner of the richest vineyard in Champagne. . . . There is an unspeakable pleasure in calling anything one's own. A freehold, though it be but in ice and snow, will make the owner pleased in the possession, and stout in the defence of it. . . . I consider myself as one who give my consent to every law which passes. . . . A freeholder is but one remove from a legislator, and for that reason ought to stand up in the defence of those laws which are in some degree of his own making.'[1]

These are all English feelings, made up of calculation and pride, energetic and austere; and this portrait is capped by that of the married man:

'Nothing is more gratifying to the mind of man than power or dominion; and this I think myself amply possessed of, as I am the father of a family. I am perpetually taken up in giving out orders, in prescribing duties, in hearing parties, in administering justice, and in distributing rewards and punishments. . . . I look upon my family as a patriarchal sovereignty, in which I am myself both king and priest. . . . When I see my little troop before me, I rejoice in the additions I have made to my species, to my country, and to my religion, in having produced such a number of reasonable creatures, citizens, and Christians. I am pleased to see myself thus perpetuated; and as there is no production comparable to that of a human creature, I am more proud of having been the occasion of ten such glorious productions, than if I had built a hundred pyramids at my own expense, or published as many volumes of the finest wit and learning.'[2]

If now you take the man away from his estate and his household, alone with himself, in moments of idleness or reverie, you will find him just as positive. He observes, that he may cultivate his own reasoning power, and that of others; he stores himself with morality; he wishes to make the most of himself and of existence. The northern races willingly direct their thoughts to final dissolution and the dark

[1] *Freeholder*, No. 1. [2] *Spectator*, No. 500.

future. Addison often chose for his promenade gloomy Westminster Abbey, with its many tombs:

'Upon my going into the church I entertained myself with the digging of a grave; and saw in every shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the fragment of a bone or skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering earth that some time or other had a place in the composition of an human body. . . . I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries and make our appearance together.'[1]

And suddenly his emotion is transformed into profitable meditations. Under his morality is a balance which weighs the quantities of happiness. He stirs himself by mathematical comparisons to prefer the future to the present. He tries to realise, amidst an assemblage of dates, the disproportion of our short life to infinity. Thus arises this religion, a product of melancholic temperament and acquired logic, in which man, a sort of calculating Hamlet, aspires to the ideal by making a good business of it, and maintains his poetical sentiments by financial additions.

In such a subject these habits are offensive. We ought not to try and over-define or prove God; religion is rather a matter of feeling than of science; we compromise it by exacting too rigorous demonstrations, and too precise dogmas. It is the heart which sees heaven; if you would make me believe in it, as you make me believe in the Antipodes, by geographical accounts and probabilities, I shall barely or not at all believe. Addison has little more than his college arguments or edification, very like those of the Abbé Pluche,[2] which let in objections at every cleft, and which we can only regard as dialectical essays, or sources of emotion. Add the motives of interest and calculations of prudence, which can make recruits, but not converts; these are his proofs. There is an element of coarseness in this fashion of treating divine things, and we like still less the exactness with which he explains God, reducing him to a mere magnified man. This preciseness and this narrowness go so far as to describe heaven:

'Though the Deity be thus essentially present through all the immensity of space, there is one part of it in which he discovers himself in a most transcendent and visible glory. . . . It is here where the glorified body of our Saviour resides, and where all the celestial hierarchies, and the innumerable hosts of angels, are represented as perpetually surrounding the seat of God with hallelujahs and hymns of praise. . . . With how much skill must the throne of God be erected! . . . How great must be the majesty of that place, where the whole art of creation has been employed, and where God has chosen to shew himself in the most magnificent manner! What must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom?'[3]

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 26 and 575.

[2] The Abbé Pluche (1688–1761) was the author of a *Système de la Natur* and several other works.—TR.

[3] *Spectator*, No. 580; see also No. 531.

Moreover, the place must be very grand, and they have music there: it is a noble palace; perhaps there are antechambers. Enough; I will not continue. The same dull and literal precision makes him inquire what sort of happiness the elect have.[1] They will be admitted into the councils of Providence, and will understand all its proceedings:

'There is, doubtless, a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another as our senses do material objects; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the Divine Presence.'[2]

This grovelling philosophy repels you. One word of Addison will justify it, and make you understand it: 'The business of mankind in this life is rather to act than to know.' Now, such a philosophy is as useful in action as flat in science. All its faults of speculation become merits in practice. It follows in a prosy manner positive religion.[3] What support does it not attain from the authority of an ancient tradition, a national institution, an established priesthood, visible ceremonies, every-day customs! It employs as arguments public utility, the example of great minds, heavy logic, literal interpretation, and unmistakeable texts. What better means of governing the crowd, than to degrade proofs to the vulgarity of its intelligence and needs? It humanises the Divinity: is it not the only way to make men understand him? It defines almost obviously a future life: is it not the only way to cause it to be wished for? The poetry of high philosophical deductions is weak beside the inner persuasion, rooted by so many positive and detailed descriptions. In this way an active piety is born; and religion thus constructed doubles the force of the moral spring. Addison's is admirable, because it is so strong. Energy of feeling rescues wretchedness of dogma. Beneath his dissertations we feel that he is moved; minutiæ, pedantry disappear. We see in him now only a soul deeply penetrated with adoration and respect; no more a preacher classifying God's attributes, and pursuing his trade as a good logician; but a man who naturally, and of his own bent, returns to a lofty spectacle, goes with awe into all its aspects, and leaves it only with a renewed or overwhelmed heart. The sincerity of his emotions makes us respect even his catechetical prescriptions. He demands fixed days of devotion and meditation to recall us regularly to the thought of our Creator and of our faith. He inserts prayers in his paper. He forbids oaths, and recommends to keep always before us the idea of a sovereign Master:

'Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions. . . . What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 237, 571, 600.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 571; see also Nos. 237, 600.

[3] *Tatler*, No. 257.

impertinent passions? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humour? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries! It would be an affront to reason to endeavour to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice.'[1]

A Frenchman, at the first word, hearing himself forbidden to swear, would probably laugh; in his eyes that is a matter of good taste, not of morality. But if he had heard Addison himself pronouncing what I have written, he would laugh no more.

V.

It is no small thing to make morality fashionable. Addison did it, and it remained in fashion. Formerly honest men were not polished, and polished men were not honest; piety was fanatical, and urbanity depraved; in manners, as in letters, one could meet only Puritans or libertines. For the first time Addison reconciled virtue with elegance, taught duty in an accomplished style, and made pleasure subservient to reason:

'It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses. I would therefore, in a very particular manner, recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families, and set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea-equipage.'[2]

In this you may detect an inclination to smile; it is the tone of a polished man, who, at the first sign of ennui, turns round, delicately laughs at himself, and tries to please. It is Addison's general tone.

What an art it is to please! First, the art of making oneself understood, at once, always, completely, without difficulty to the reader, without reflection, without attention. Figure to yourself men of the world reading a page between two mouthfuls of 'bohea-rolls,' ladies interrupting a phrase to ask when the ball begins: three special or learned words would make them throw the paper down. They only desire clear terms, in common use, into which wit enters all at once, as it enters ordinary converse; in fact, for them reading is only a conversation, and a better one than usual. For the select world refines language. It does not suffer the risks and approximations of extempore and inexperienced speaking. It requires a knowledge of style, like a knowledge of external forms. It will have exact words to express the fine shades of thought, and measured words to preclude shocking or extreme impressions. It wishes for developed phrases, which, presenting the same idea, under several aspects, may impress it easily upon its desultory mind. It demands harmonies of words, which, presenting a known

[1] *Spectator*, No. 531. [2] *Ibid.* No. 10.

idea in a smart form, may introduce it in a lively manner to its desultory imagination. Addison gives it all that it desires; his writings are the pure source of classical style; men never spoke in England better. Ornaments abound, and rhetoric has no part in them. Throughout we have just contrasts, which serve only for clearness, and are not too much prolonged; happy expressions, easily discovered, which give things a new and ingenious turn; harmonious periods, in which the sounds flow into one another with the diversity and sweetness of a quiet stream; a fertile vein of inventions and images, through which runs the most amiable irony. We trust one example will suffice:

'He is not obliged to attend her (Nature) in the slow advances which she makes from one season to another, or to observe her conduct in the successive production of plants and flowers. He may draw into his description all the beauties of the spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines may flower together, and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amaranths. His soil is not restrained to any particular set of plants, but is proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts itself to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. If all this will not furnish out any agreeable scene, he can make several new species of flowers, with richer scents and higher colours, than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than a short one, and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice of half a mile high as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers in all the variety of meanders that are most delightful to the reader's imagination.'[1]

I find here that Addison profits by the rights which he accords, and is amused in explaining to us how we may amuse ourselves. Such is the charming tone of society. Reading this book, we fancy it still more amiable than it is: no pretension; no efforts; endless contrivance employed unconsciously, and obtained without asking; the gift of being lively and agreeable; a refined banter, raillery without bitterness, a sustained gaiety; the art of finding in everything the most blooming and the freshest flower, and to smell it without bruising or sullying it, science, politics, experience, morality, bearing their finest fruits, adorning them, offering them at a chosen moment, ready to withdraw them as soon as conversation has received the flavour, and before it is tired of them; ladies placed in the first rank,[2] arbiters of refinement, surrounded with homage, crowning the politeness of men and the brilliancy of society by the attraction of their toilettes, the delicacy of their wit, and the charm of their smiles;—such is the familiar spectacle in which the writer has formed and delighted himself.

So many advantages are not without their inconvenience. The

[1] *Spectator*, No. 418.

[2] *Ibid.* Nos. 423, 265.

compliments of society, which attenuate expressions, blunt the style; by regulating what is instinctive and moderating what is vehement, they make speech threadbare and uniform. We must not always seek to please, above all, the ear. Monsieur Chateaubriand boasted of not admitting a single elision into the song of *Cymodocée;* so much the worse for *Cymodocée.* So the commentators who have noted in Addison the balance of his periods, do him an injustice.[1] They explain why he slightly wearies us. The rotundity of his phrases is a scanty merit, and mars the rest. To calculate longs and shorts, to be always thinking of sounds, of final cadences,—all these classical researches spoil a writer. Every idea has its accent, and all our labour ought to be to make it free and simple on paper, as it is in our mind. We ought to copy and mark our thought with the flow of emotions and images, which raise it, caring for nothing but its exactness and clearness. One true phrase is worth a hundred periods: the first is a document which fixes for ever a movement of the heart or the senses; the other is a toy to amuse the empty heads of verse-makers. I would give twenty pages of Fléchier for three lines of Saint-Simon. Regular rhythm mutilates the impetus of natural invention; the shades of inner vision vanish; we see no more a soul which thinks or feels, but fingers which scan. The continuous period is like the shears of La Quintinie,[2] which crop all the trees round, under pretence of beautifying. This is why there is a coldness and monotony in Addison's style. He seems to be listening to himself. He is too measured and correct. His most touching stories, like that of *Theodosius and Constantia*, touch us only partially. Who could feel inclined to weep over such periods as these?

'Constantia, who knew that nothing but the report of her marriage could have driven him to such extremities, was not to be comforted: she now accused herself for having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short, she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure, rather than to comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full of guilt and horror.'[3]

Is this the way to paint horror and guilt? Where are the motions of passion which Addison pretends to paint? The story is related, not seen.

The classic simply cannot see. Always measured and rational, his first care is to proportion and arrange. He has his rules in his pocket, and brings them out for everything. He does not rise to the source of the beautiful at once, like genuine artists, by force and lucidity of

[1] See, in the notes of No. 409 of the *Spectator*, the pretty minute analysis of Hurd, the decomposition of the period, the proportion of long and short syllables, the study of the finals. A musician could not have done better.

[2] La Quintinie (1626–1688) was a celebrated gardener under Louis XIV., and planned the gardens of Versailles.

[3] *Spectator*, No. 164.

natural inspiration; he lingers in the middle regions, amid precepts, subject to taste and common sense. This is why Addison's criticism is so solid and so poor. They who seek ideas will do well not to read his *Essays on Imagination*,[1] so much praised, so well written, but so scant of philosophy, and so commonplace, dragged down by the intervention of final causes. His celebrated commentary on *Paradise Lost* is little better than the dissertations of Batteux and Bossu. In one place he compares, almost in a line, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. The fine arrangement of a poem is with him the best merit. The pure classics enjoy better arrangement and good order than artless truth and strong originality. They have always their poetic manual in their hands: if you agree with the pattern of to-day, you have genius; if not, not. Addison, in praise of Milton, establishes that, according to the rule of epic poetry, the action of *Paradise Lost* is one, complete and great; that its characters are varied and of universal interest, and its sentiments natural, appropriate, and elevated; the style clear, diversified, and sublime. Now you may admire Milton; he has a testimonial from Aristotle. Listen, for instance, to cold details of classical dissertation:

'Had I followed Monsieur Bossu's method in my first paper on Milton, I should have dated the action of *Paradise Lost* from the beginning of Raphael's speech in this book.'[2]

'But, notwithstanding the fineness of this allegory (Sin and Death) may atone for it (the defect in the subject of his poem) in some measure, I cannot think that persons of such a chimerical existence are proper actors in an epic poem.'[3]

Further on he defines poetical machines, the conditions of their structure, the advantage of their use. He seems to me a carpenter verifying the construction of a staircase. Do not suppose that artificiality shocks him; he rather admires it. He finds the violent declamations of the Miltonic divinity and the royal compliments, indulged in by the persons of the Trinity, sublime. The campaigns of the angels, their bearing in chapel and barrack, their scholastic disputes, their bitter puritanical or pious royalistic style, do not strike him as false or disagreeable. Adam's pedantry and household lectures appear to him suitable to the state of innocence. In fact, the classics of the last two centuries never looked upon the human mind, except in its cultivated state. The child, the artist, the barbarian, the inspired man, escaped them; so, of course, did all who were beyond humanity: their world was limited to the earth, and to the earth of the study and drawing-rooms; they rose neither to God nor nature, or if they did, it was to transform nature into a narrow garden, and God into a moral scrutator. They reduced genius to eloquence, poetry to discourse, the drama to a dialogue. They regarded beauty as if it were reason, a sort of middle faculty, not apt for invention, potent in rules, balancing imagination like conduct, and making taste the arbiter of

[1] See *Spectator*, No. 411–No. 432. [2] *Ibid.* No. 327. [3] *Ibid.* No. 273

letters, as it made morality the arbiter of actions. They dispensed with the play on words, the sensual grossness, the flights of imagination, the atrocities, and all the bad accompaniments of Shakspeare;[1] but they only half imitated him in the deep intuitions by which he pierced the human heart, and discovered therein the God and the animal. They wanted to be moved, but not overwhelmed; they allowed themselves to be impressed, but demanded to be pleased. To please rationally was the object of their literature. Such is Addison's criticism, which resembles his art; born, like his art, of classical urbanity; fit, like his art, for the life of the world, having the same solidity and the same limits, because it had the same sources, to wit, rule and gratification.

VI.

But we must consider that we are in England, and that we find there many things not agreeable to a Frenchman. In France, the classical age attained perfection; so that, compared to it, other countries lack somewhat of finish. Addison, elegant at home, is not quite so in France. Compared with Tillotson, he is the most charming man possible; compared to Montesquieu, he is only half polished. His converse is hardly sparkling enough; the quick movement, the easy change of tone, the facile smile, readily dropt and readily resumed, are hardly visible. He drags on in long and too uniform phrases; his periods are too square; we might cull a load of useless words. He tells us what he is going to say: he marks divisions and subdivisions; he quotes Latin, even Greek; he displays and protracts without end the serviceable and sticky plaster of his morality. He has no fear of being wearisome. That is not a point of fear amongst Englishmen. Men who love long demonstrative sermons of three hours are not difficult to amuse. Remember that here the women like to go to meeting, and are entertained by listening for half a day to discourses on drunkenness, or on the sliding scale for taxes: these patient creatures require nothing more than that conversation should be lively and piquant. Consequently they can put up with a less refined politeness and less disguised compliments. When Addison bows to them, which happens often, it is gravely, and his reverence is always accompanied by a warning. Take the following on the gaudy dresses:

'I looked with as much pleasure upon this little party-coloured assembly, as upon a bed of tulips, and did not know at first whether it might not be an embassy of Indian queens; but upon my going about into the pit, and taking them in front, I was immediately undeceived, and saw so much beauty in every face, that I found them all to be English. Such eyes and lips, cheeks and foreheads, could be the growth of no other country. The complexion of their faces hindered me from observing any further the colour of their hoods, though I could easily perceive, by that unspeakable satisfaction which appeared in their looks, that their own thoughts were wholly taken up on those pretty ornaments they wore upon their heads.'[2]

[1] *Spectator* 39, 40, 58.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 265

In this discreet raillery, modified by an almost official admiration, you perceive the English mode of treating women: man, by her side, is always a lay-preacher; they are for him charming children, or useful housewives, never queens of the drawing-room, or equals, as amongst the French. When Addison wishes to bring back the Jacobite ladies to the Protestant party, he treats them almost like little girls, to whom we promise, if they will be good, to restore their doll or their cake:

'They should first reflect on the great sufferings and persecutions to which they expose themselves by the obstinacy of their behaviour. They lose their elections in every club where they are set up for toasts. They are obliged by their principles to stick a patch on the most unbecoming side of their foreheads. They forego the advantage of birthday suits. . . . They receive no benefit from the army, and are never the better for all the young fellows that wear hats and feathers. They are forced to live in the country and feed their chickens; at the same time that they might show themselves at court, and appear in brocade, if they behaved themselves well. In short, what must go to the heart of every fine woman, they throw themselves quite out of the fashion. . . . A man is startled when he sees a pretty bosom heaving with such party-rage, as is disagreeable even in that sex which is of a more coarse and rugged make. And yet such is our misfortune, that we sometimes see a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition; and hear the most masculine passions expressed in the sweetest voices. . . . Where a great number of flowers grow, the ground at distance seems entirely covered with them, and we must walk into it, before we can distinguish the several weeds that spring up in such a beautiful mass of colours.'[1]

This gallantry is too deliberate; we are somewhat shocked to see a woman touched by such thoughtful hands. It is the urbanity of a moralist; albeit he is well bred, he is not quite amiable; and if a Frenchman can receive from him lessons of pedagogy and conduct, he must come over to France to find models of manners and conversation.

If the first care of a Frenchman in society is to be amiable, that of an Englishman is to be dignified; their mood leads them to immobility, as ours to gestures; and their pleasantry is as grave as ours is gay. Laughter with them is inward; they shun giving themselves up to it; they are amused silently. Make up your mind to understand this kind of temper, it will end by pleasing you. When phlegm is united to gentleness, as in Addison, it is as agreeable as it is piquant. We are charmed to meet a lively man, who is yet master of himself. We are astonished to see these contrary qualities together. Each heightens and modifies the other. We are not repelled by venomous bitterness, as in Swift, or by continuous buffoonery, as in Voltaire. We rejoice altogether in the rare union, which for the first time combines serious bearing and good humour. Read this little satire against the bad taste of the stage and the public:

'There is nothing that of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signor Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which

[1] *Freeholder*, No. 26.

has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. . . . The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done. . . . The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that, after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of shewing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-coloured doublet; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor. . . . The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain, that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking. . . . This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man. . . . In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain.'[1]

There is much originality in this grave gaiety. As a rule, singularity is in accordance with the taste of the nation; they like to be struck strongly by contrasts. Our literature seems to them threadbare; we again find them not delicate. A number of the *Spectator* which seemed pleasant to London ladies would have shocked people in Paris. Thus, Addison relates in the form of a dream the dissection of a beau's brain:

'The pineal gland, which many of our modern philosophers suppose to be the seat of the soul, smelt very strong of essence and orange-flower water, and was encompassed with a kind of horny substance, cut into a thousand little faces or mirrors, which were imperceptible to the naked eye; insomuch that the soul, if there had been any here, must have been always taken up in contemplating her own beauties. We observed a large antrum or cavity in the sinciput, that was filled with ribbons, lace, and embroidery. . . . We did not find anything very remarkable in the eye, saving only, that the *musculi amatorii*, or, as we may translate it into English, the ogling muscles, were very much worn, and decayed with use; whereas, on the contrary, the elevator, or the muscle which turns the eye towards heaven, did not appear to have been used at all.'[2]

These anatomical details, which would disgust us, amused a positive mind; crudity is for him only exactness; accustomed to precise images, he finds no objectionable odour in the medical style. Addison does not share our repugnance. To rail at a vice, he becomes a mathematician, an economist, a pedant, an apothecary. Special terms amuse him. He sets up a court to judge crinolines, and condemns petticoats in technical formulas. He teaches how to handle a fan as if he were teaching to prime and load muskets. He draws up a list of men dead or in-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 13. [2] *Ibid.* No. 275.

jured by love, and the ridiculous causes which have reduced them to such a condition:

'Will Simple, smitten at the Opera by the glance of an eye that was aimed at one who stood by him.

'Sir Christopher Crazy, Bart., hurt by the brush of a whalebone petticoat.

'Ned Courtly, presenting Flavia with her glove (which she had dropped on purpose), she received it and took away his life with a curtsey.

'John Gosselin, having received a slight hurt from a pair of blue eyes, as he was making his escape, was dispatched by a smile.'[1]

Other statistics, with recapitulations and tables of numbers, relate the history of the Leucadian leap:

'Aridæus, a beautiful youth of Epirus, in love with Praxinoe, the wife of Thespis, escaped without damage, saving only that two of his foreteeth were struck out, and his nose a little flatted.

'Hipparchus, being passionately fond of his own wife, who was enamoured of Bathyllus, leaped and died of his fall; upon which his wife married her gallant.'[2]

You see this strange mode of painting human folly: in England it is called humour. It contains an incisive good sense, the habit of restraint, business habits, but above all a fundamental energy of invention. The race is less refined, but stronger; and the pleasures which content its mind and taste are like the liquors which suit its palate and its stomach.

This potent Germanic spirit breaks even in Addison through his classical and Latin exterior. Albeit he relishes art, he still loves nature. His education, which has loaded him with maxims, has not destroyed his virgin sentiment of truth. In his travels in France he preferred the wildness of Fontainebleau to the correctness of Versailles. He shakes off worldly refinements to praise the simplicity of the old national ballads. He explains to his public the sublime images, the vast passions, the deep religion of *Paradise Lost*. It is curious to see him, compass in hand, kept back by Bossu, fettered in endless arguments and academical phrases, attaining with one spring, by strength of natural emotion, the high unexplored regions to which Milton rose by the inspiration of faith and genius. He would not say, with Voltaire, that the allegory of Sin and Death is enough to make people sick. He has a foundation of grand imagination, which makes him indifferent to the little refinements of social civilisation. He sojourns willingly amid the grandeur and marvels of the other world. He is penetrated by the presence of the Invisible, he must escape from the interests and hopes of the petty life in which we crawl.[3] This source of faith gushes from him everywhere; in vain is it enclosed in the regular channel of official dogma; the tests and arguments with which it is covered do not hide its true origin. It springs from the grave and fertile imagination which can only be satisfied with a sight of what is beyond.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 377.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 233.

[3] See the last thirty numbers of the *Spectator*.

Such a faculty swallows a man up: and if we descend to the examination of literary qualities, we find it at the bottom as well as at the top. Nothing in Addison is more varied and rich than the changes and the scenery. The driest morality is transformed under his hand into pictures and stories. There are letters from all kinds of men, clergymen, common people, men of fashion, who keep their own style, and disguise their advice under the form of a little novel. An ambassador from Bantam jests, like Montesquieu, at the lies of European politeness. Greek or Oriental tales, imaginary travels, the vision of a Scotch seer, the memoirs of a rebel, the history of ants, the transformations of an ape, the journal of an idle man, a walk in Westminster, the genealogy of humour, the laws of ridiculous clubs; in short, an inexhaustible mass of pleasant or solid fictions. The allegories are most frequent. We feel that the author is pleased in this magnificent and fantastic world; he is giving himself a sort of opera; his eyes must look on colours. Here is a paper on religions, very Protestant, but as sparkling as it is ingenious: pleasure here did not consist, as in France, in the vivacity and variety of tone, but in the splendour and justice of invention:

'The middle figure, which immediately attracted the eyes of the whole company, and was much bigger than the rest, was formed like a matron, dressed in the habit of an elderly woman of quality in Queen Elizabeth's days. The most remarkable parts of her dress were the beaver with the steeple crown, the scarf that was darker than sable, and the lawn apron that was whiter than ermine. Her gown was of the richest black velvet, and just upon her heart studded with large diamonds of an inestimable value, disposed in the form of a cross. She bore an inexpressible cheerfulness and dignity in her aspect; and though she seemed in years, appeared with so much spirit and vivacity, as gave her at the same time an air of old age and immortality. I found my heart touched with so much love and reverence at the sight of her, that the tears ran down my face as I looked upon her; and still the more I looked upon her, the more my heart was melted with the sentiments of filial tenderness and duty. I discovered every moment something so charming in this figure, that I could scarce take my eyes off it. On its right hand there sat the figure of a woman so covered with ornaments, that her face, her body, and her hands were almost entirely hid under them. The little you could see of her face was painted, and what I thought very odd, had something in it like artificial wrinkles; but I was the less surprised at it, when I saw upon her forehead an old-fashioned tower of grey hairs. Her head-dress rose very high by three several stories or degrees; her garments had a thousand colours in them, and were embroidered with crosses in gold, silver, and silk; she had nothing on, so much as a glove or a slipper, which was not marked with this figure; nay, so superstitiously fond did she appear of it, that she sat cross-legged. . . . The next to her was a figure which somewhat puzzled me; it was that of a man looking, with horror in his eyes, upon a silver bason filled with water. Observing something in his countenance that looked like lunacy, I fancied at first that he was to express that kind of distraction which the physicians call the Hydrophobia; but considering what the intention of the show was, I immediately recollected myself, and concluded it to be Anabaptism.'[1]

[1] *Tatler*, No. 257.

The reader must guess what these two first figures meant. They will please an Anglican more than a Catholic; but I think that a Catholic himself cannot help recognising the fulness and freshness of the fiction.

Genuine imagination naturally ends in the invention of characters. For, if you clearly represent to yourself a situation or an action, you will see at the same time the whole network of its connection; the passion and faculties, all the gestures and tones of voice, all details of dress, dwelling, society, which flow from it, will bring their precedents and their consequences; and this multitude of ideas, slowly organised, will at last be concentrated in a single sentiment, from which, as from a deep spring, will break forth the portrait and the history of a complete character. There are several such in Addison; the quiet observer Will Honeycomb, the country Tory Sir Roger de Coverley, which are not satirical theses, like those of La Bruyère, but genuine individuals, like, and sometimes equal to, the characters of the great contemporary novels. In fact, he invents the novel, without suspecting it, at the same time and in the same way as his most illustrious neighbours. His characters are taken from life, from the manners and conditions of the time, described at length and minutely in all the parts of their education and surroundings, with the precision and positive observation, marvellously real and English. A masterpiece as well as an historical record is Sir Roger de Coverley, the country gentleman, loyal servant of constitution and church, justice of the peace, patron of the church, whose estate shows on a small scale the structure of the English nation. This domain is a little state, paternally governed, but still governed. Sir Roger rates his tenants, passes them in review in church, knows their affairs, gives them advice, assistance, commands; he is respected, obeyed, loved, because he lives with them, because the simplicity of his tastes and education puts him almost on a level with them; because in his position as magistrate, old landholder, rich man, benefactor, and neighbour, he exercises a moral and legal, a useful and respected authority. Addison at the same time shows in him the solid and peculiar English character, built of heart of oak, with all the knots of the primitive bark, which can neither be softened nor planed down, a great fund of kindness which extends to animals, love of country and bodily exercises, a disposition to command and discipline, the feeling of subordination and respect, much common sense and little finesse, the habit of displaying and establishing in public his singularities and oddities, careless of ridicule, without thought of bravado, solely because these men acknowledge no judge but themselves. A hundred traits depict the times; a lack of reading, a remnant of belief in witchcraft, peasant and hunting manners, the ignorances of an artless or backward mind. Sir Roger gives the children, who answer their catechism well, a Bible for themselves, and a quarter of bacon for their mothers. When a verse pleases him, he sings it for half a minute after the congregation has finished. He kills eight fat pigs at Christmas, and sends a pudding

and a pack of cards to each poor family in the parish. When he goes to the theatre, he supplies his servants with cudgels to protect themselves from the thieves which, he says, infest London. Addison returns a score of times to the old knight, always discovering some new aspect of his character, a disinterested observer of humanity, curiously assiduous and discerning, a true creator, having but a step to go to enter, like Richardson and Fielding, upon the great work of modern literature, the novel of manners and customs.

Beyond this, all is poetry. It has flowed through his prose a thousand times more sincere and beautiful than in his verses. Rich oriental fancies are displayed, not with a shower of sparks as in Voltaire, but under a calm and abundant light, which makes the regular folds of their purple and gold undulate. The music of the long cadenced and tranquil phrases leads the mind sweetly amidst romantic splendours and enchantments, and the deep sentiment of ever young nature recalls the happy quietude of Spenser.[1] Through gentle railleries or moral essays we feel that his imagination is happy, delighted in the contemplation of the sway of the forests which clothe the mountains, the eternal verdure of the valleys, invigorated by fresh springs, and the wide horizons undulating to the border of the distant sky. Great and simple sentiments come naturally to unite these noble images, and their measured harmony creates a unique spectacle, worthy to fascinate the heart of an honest man by its gravity and sweetness. Such are the Visions of Mirza, which I will give almost entire:

'On the fifth day of the moon, which according to the custom of my forefathers I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanity of human life; and passing from one thought to another: Surely, said I, man is but a shadow and life a dream. Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a little musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different from any thing I had ever heard. They put me in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of the last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures. . . .

'He (the genius) then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, Cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the Vale of Misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of eternity which is called

[1] *Story of Abdallah and of Hilpa.*

time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life; consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of three score and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. As I was counting the arches, the genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches: but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition I now beheld it. But tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed underneath it; and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide, and immediately disappeared. These hidden pit-falls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

'There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent with so long a walk.

'I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards heaven in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a speculation stumbled and fell out of sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed, and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects, I observed some with scimitars in their hands, and others with urinals, who ran to and fro upon the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped had they not been thus forced upon them. . . .

'I here fetched a deep sigh. Alas, said I, man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!—The genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. Look no more, said he, on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it. I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the valley opening at the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it: but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits, with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of

the fountains, or resting on beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. The islands, said he, that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching farther than thine eye, or even thine imagination, can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among these several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them: every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirza, habitations worth contending for? Does life appear miserable, that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward? Is death to be feared, that will convey thee to so happy an existence? Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him.—I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. At length, said I, shew me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant. The genius making me no answer, I turned me about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me; I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating; but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.'[1]

In this ornate moral sketch, this fine piece of argument, so correct and so eloquent, this ingenious and noble imagination, I find an epitome of all Addison's characteristics. These are the English tints which distinguish this classical age from that of the French: a narrower and more practical argument, a more poetical and less eloquent urbanity, a structure of mind more inventive and more rich, less sociable and less refined.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 159.

CHAPTER V.

Swift.

I. Swift's origin—Character—Pride—Sensitiveness—His life in Sir William Temple's house—At Lord Berkeley's—Political life—Influence—Failure—Private life—Lovemaking—Despair and insanity.

II. His wit—His power, and its limits—Prosaic and positive mind—Holding a mean position between vulgarity and genius—Why destructive.

III. The pamphleteer—How literature now concerns itself with politics—Difference of parties and pamphlets in France and England—Conditions of the literary pamphlet—Of the effective pamphlet—These pamphlets are special and practical—The *Examiner*—*The Drapier's Letters*—*A Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton*—*An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*—Political invective—Personal defamation—Incisive common sense—Grave irony.

IV. The poet—Comparison of Swift and Voltaire—Gravity and harshness of his jests—*Bickerstaff*—Coarseness of his gallantry—*Cadenus and Vanessa*—His prosaic and realistic poetry—*The Grand Question Debated*—Energy and sadness of his shorter poems—*Verses on his own Death*—His excesses.

V. The narrator and philosopher—*A Tale of a Tub*—His opinion on religion, science, philosophy, and reason—How he maligns human intelligence—*Gulliver's Travels*—His opinion on society, government, rank, and professions—How he maligns human nature—Last pamphlets—Composition of his character and genius.

IN 1685, in the great hall of Dublin University, the professors engaged in examining for the bachelor's degree enjoyed a singular spectacle: a poor scholar, odd, awkward, with hard blue eyes, an orphan, friendless, poorly supported by the charity of an uncle, having failed once before to take his degree on account of his ignorance of logic, had come up again without having condescended to read logic. To no purpose his tutor set before him the most respectable folios—Smiglecius, Kechermannus, Burgerdiscius. He turned over a few pages, and shut them directly. When the argumentation came on, the proctor was obliged to 'reduce his replies into syllogism.' He was asked how he could reason well without rules; he replied that he did reason pretty well without them. This folly shocked them; yet he was received, though barely, *speciali gratiâ*, says the register, and the professors went away, doubtless with pitying smiles, lamenting the feeble brain of Jonathan Swift.

I.

This was his first humiliation and his first rebellion. His whole life was like this moment, overwhelmed and made wretched by sorrows and hatred. To what excess they rose, his portrait and his history alone can show. He had an exaggerated and terrible pride, and made the haughtiness of the most powerful ministers and most mighty lords bend beneath his arrogance. A simple journalist, possessing nothing but a small Irish living, he treated with them on an equality. Harley, the prime minister, having sent him a bank bill for his first articles, he was offended at being taken for a paid man, returned the money, demanded an apology; he received it, and wrote in his journal: 'I have taken Mr. Harley into favour again.'[1] On another occasion, having observed that St. John, Secretary of State, looked upon him coldly, he rebuked him for it:

'One thing I warned him of, never to appear cold to me, for I would not be treated like a school-boy; that I expected every great minister who honoured me with his acquaintance, if he heard or saw anything to my disadvantage, would let me know in plain words, and not put me in pain to guess by the change or coldness of his countenance or behaviour; for it was what I would hardly bear from a crowned head; and I thought no subject's favour was worth it: and that I designed to let my Lord Keeper and M. Harley know the same thing, that they might use me accordingly.'[2]

St. John approved of this, made excuses, said that he had passed several nights at 'business, and one night at drinking,' and that his fatigue might have seemed like ill-humour. In the minister's drawing-room Swift went up and spoke to some obscure person, and compelled the lords to come and speak to him:

'Mr. secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking to him much about me, and desired my acquaintance. I answered, it could not be, for he had not made sufficient advances. Then the Duke of Shrewsbury said, he thought the Duke was not used to make advances. I said, I could not help that; for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a duke than other men.'[3]

'Saw Lord Halifax at court, and we joined and talked, and the Duchess of Shrewsbury came up and reproached me for not dining with her: I said that was not so soon done; for I expected more advances from ladies, especially duchesses: She promised to comply. . . . Lady Oglethorp brought me and the Duchess of Hamilton together to-day in the drawing-room, and I have given her some encouragement, but not much.'[4]

[1] In Swift's Works, ed. W. Scott, 19 vols. 1814; *Journal to Stella*, ii. Feb. 13 (1710–11). He says also (Feb. 7): 'I will not see him (M. Harley) till he makes amends. . . . I was deaf to all entreaties, and have desired Lewis to go to him, and let him know that I expected farther satisfaction. If we let these great ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them.'

[2] *Ibid.* April 3, 1711. [3] *Ibid.* May 19, 1711. [4] *Ibid.* Oct. 7, 1711.

He triumphed in his arrogance, and said with a restrained joy, full of vengeance:

'I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing-room, and am so proud that I make all the lords come up to me. One passes half an hour pleasant enough.'

He carried his triumph to brutality and tyranny; writing to the Duchess of Queensberry, he says:

'I am glad you know your duty; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England, that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspired to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality, the greater were their advances.'[1]

The famous General Webb, with his crutch and cane, limped up two flights of stairs to congratulate and invite him; Swift accepted, then an hour later withdrew his consent, preferring to dine elsewhere. He seemed to look upon himself as a superior being, exempt from the necessity of ceremony, entitled to homage, caring neither for sex, rank, nor fame, whose business it was to protect and destroy, distributing favours, insults, and pardons. Addison, then Lady Gifford, a friend of twenty years, having offended him, he refused to take them back into his favour until they had asked his pardon. Lord Lansdown, Secretary for War, being annoyed by an expression in the *Examiner*, Swift says:

'This I resented highly that he should complain of me before he spoke to me. I sent him a peppering letter, and would not summon him by a note, as I did the rest; nor ever will have anything to say to him, till he begs my pardon.'[2]

He treated art like man, writing a thing off, scorning the wretched necessity of reading it over, putting his name to nothing, letting every piece make its way on its own merits, unassisted, without the prestige of his name, recommended by none. He had the soul of a dictator, marred by power, and saying openly: 'All my endeavours from a boy to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune, that I might be treated like a lord. . . . Whether right or wrong, it is no great matter; and so the reputation of great learning does the work of a blue ribbon, or of a coach and six horses.'[3] But he thought this power and rank due to him; he did not ask, but expected them. 'I will never beg for myself, though I often do it for others.' He desired dominion, and acted as if he had it. Hatred and misfortune find their native soil in these despotic minds. They live like fallen kings, always insulting and hurt, having all the miseries but none of the consolations of pride, unable to relish either society or solitude, too ambitious to be content with silence, too haughty to use the world, born for rebellion and defeat, destined by their passions and impotence to despair and to talent.

[1] Swift's Works, xvii. p. 352.

[2] *Journal to Stella*, iii., March 27, 1711–12

[3] Letter to Pope.

Sensitiveness in this case aggravated the stings of pride. Under this outward calmness raged furious passions. There was within him a ceaseless tempest of wrath and desire:

'A person of great honour in Ireland (who was pleased to stoop so low as to look into my mind) used to tell me that my mind was like a conjured spirit, that would do mischief, if I would not give it employment.'

Resentment was deeper and hotter with him than with other men. Listen to the deep sigh of joyful hatred with which he sees his enemies under his feet:

'The whigs were ravished to see me, and would lay hold on me as a twig while they are drowning; and the great men making me their clumsy apologies.'[1] 'It is good to see what a lamentable confession the whigs all make of my ill usage.'[2]

And soon after: 'Rot them, for ungrateful dogs; I will make them repent their usage before I leave this place.'[3] He is satiated and contented; like a wolf or a lion, he cares for nothing else.

This fury led him to every sort of madness and violence. His *Drapier's Letters* had roused Ireland against the government, and the government had set up a proclamation offering a reward to any one who would denounce the Draper. Swift came suddenly into the reception-chamber, elbowed the groups, went up to the lord-lieutenant, with indignation on his countenance and thundering voice, and said:

'So, my lord, this is a glorious exploit that you performed yesterday, in suffering a proclamation against a poor shopkeeper, whose only crime is an honest endeavour to save his country from ruin.'[4]

And he broke out into railing amidst general silence and amazement. The lord-lieutenant, a man of sense, answered calmly. Before such a torrent men turned aside. This chaotic and self-devouring heart could not understand the calmness of his friends; he asked them: 'Do not the corruptions and villanies of men eat your flesh, and exhaust your spirits?'[5]

Resignation was repulsive to him. His actions, sudden and strange, broke in upon his silent moods like flashes of lightning. He was eccentric and violent in everything, in his pleasantry, in his private affairs, with his friends, with unknown people; he was often taken for a madman. Addison and his friends had seen for several days at the St. James' Coffee-house a singular parson, who put his hat on the table, walked for half an hour backward and forward, paid his money, and left, having attended to nothing and said nothing. They called him the mad parson. One day this parson perceives a gentleman 'just

[1] *Journal to Stella*, ii. Sept. 9, 1710.
[2] *Ibid.* Sept. 30, 1710.
[3] *Ibid.* Nov. 8, 1710.
[4] *Swift's Life*, by Roscoe, i. 56.
[5] *Swift's Life*, by W. Scott, i. 279.

come out of the country, went straight up to him, and in a very abrupt manner, without any previous salute, asked him, "Pray sir, do you know any good weather in the world?" After staring a little at the singularity of Swift's manner and the oddity of the question, the gentleman answered, "Yes, sir, I thank God, I remember a great deal of good weather in my time." "That is more," said Swift, "than I can say. I never remember any weather that was not too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry; but, however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis all very well."'[1] Another day, dining with the Earl of Burlington, the Dean said to the mistress of the house, 'Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing; sing me a song.' The lady looked on this unceremonious manner of asking a favour with distaste, and positively refused. He said, 'she should sing, or he would make her. Why, madam, I suppose you take me for one of your poor English hedge-parsons; sing when I bid you!' As the earl did nothing but laugh at this freedom, the lady was so vexed, that she burst into tears, and retired. His first compliment to her, when he saw her again, was, 'Pray, madam, are you as proud and as ill-natured now, as when I saw you last?'[2] People were astonished or amused at these outbursts; I see in them sobs and cries, the explosion of long overwhelming and bitter thoughts; they are the starts of a mind unsubdued, shuddering, rebelling, breaking the barriers, wounding, crushing, or bruising every one on its road, or those who wish to stop it. Swift became mad at last; he felt this madness coming, he has described it in a horrible manner; beforehand he has tasted all the disgust and bitterness of it; he showed it on his tragic face, in his terrible and wan eyes. This is the powerful and mournful genius which nature gave up as a prey to society and life; society and life poured all their poisons in him.

He knew what poverty and scorn were even at the age when the mind expands, when the heart is full of pride,[3] when he was hardly maintained by the alms of his family, gloomy and without hope, feeling his strength and the dangers of his strength.[4] At twenty-one, as secretary to Sir W. Temple, he had twenty pounds a year salary, sat at the

[1] Sheridan's *Life of Swift.* [2] W. Scott's *Life of Swift*, i. 477.

[3] At that time he had already begun the *Tale of a Tub.*

[4] He addresses his muse thus, in *Verses occasioned by Sir William Temple's late illness and recovery*, xiv. 45:

'Wert thou right woman, thou should'st scorn to look
On an abandoned wretch by hopes forsook;
Forsook by hopes, ill fortune's last relief,
Assign'd for life to unremitting grief;
To thee I owe that fatal bend of mind
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclined;
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride.'

same table with the upper servants,[1] wrote Pindaric odes in honour of his master, spent ten years amidst the humiliations of servitude and the familiarity of the servants' hall, obliged to adulate a gouty and flattered courtier, to submit to my lady his sister, acutely pained, 'when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour,'[2] lured by false hopes, forced after an attempt at independence to resume the livery which was choking him. 'When you find years coming on, without hopes of a place at court, . . . I directly advise you to go upon the road, which is the only post of honour left you; there you will meet many of your old comrades, and live a short life and a merry one.'[3] This is followed by instructions as to the conduct servants ought to display when led to the gallows. Such is his *Directions to Servants;* he was relating what he had suffered. At the age of thirty-one, expecting a place from William III., he edited the works of his patron, dedicated them to the sovereign, sent him a memorial, got nothing, and fell back upon the post of chaplain and private secretary to the Earl of Berkeley. He soon remained only chaplain to that nobleman, feeling all the disgust which the part of ecclesiastical valet must inspire in a man of feeling.

> 'You know I honour the cloth; I design to be a parson's wife. . . .
> And over and above, that I may have your excellency's letter
> With an order for the chaplain aforesaid, or instead of him a better.'[4]

Their excellencies, having promised him the deanery of Derry, gave it to another. Driven to politics, he wrote a Whig pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, received from Lord Halifax and the party leaders a score of fine promises, and was neglected. Twenty years of insults without revenge, and humiliations without respite; the inner tempest of nourished and crushed hopes, vivid and brilliant dreams, suddenly faded by the necessity of a mechanical duty; the habit of hatred and suffering, the necessity of concealing these, the baneful consciousness of superiority, the isolation of genius and pride, the bitterness of accumulated rage and pent-up scorn,—these were the goads which pricked him like a bull. More than a thousand pamphlets in four years, stung him still more, with such designations as renegade, traitor, and atheist. He crushed them all, set his foot on the Whig party, solaced himself with the poignant pleasure of victory. If ever a soul was saturated with the joy of tearing,

[1] These assertions have been denied. See Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 14.—Tr.

[2] 'Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirit since then, faith; he spoiled a fine gentleman.'—*Journal to Stella*, April 4, 1710–11.

[3] *Directions to Servants*, xii. ch. iii. 434.

[4] *Mrs. Harris' Petition*, xiv. 52.

outraging, and destroying, it was his. Excess of scorn, implacable irony, crushing logic, the cruel smile of the foeman, who sees beforehand the mortal spot in which he will strike his enemy, advances towards him, tortures him deliberately, eagerly, with enjoyment,—such were the feelings which had leavened him, and which broke from him with such harshness that he hindered his own career;[1] and that of so many high places for which he stretched out his hands, there remained for him only a deanery in poor Ireland. The accession of George I. exiled him thither; the accession of George II., on which he had counted, confined him there. He contended there first against popular hatred, then against the victorious minister, then against entire humanity, in sanguinary pamphlets, despairing satires;[2] he tasted there once more the pleasure of fighting and wounding; he suffered there to the end, soured by the advance of years, by the spectacle of oppression and misery, by the feeling of his own impotence, enraged to have to live amongst 'an enslaved people,' chained and vanquished. He says:

'I find myself disposed every year, or rather every month, to be more angry and revengeful; and my rage is so ignoble, that it descends even to resent the folly and baseness of the enslaved people among whom I live.'[3]

This cry is the epitome of his public life; these feelings are the materials which public life furnished to his talent.

He experienced these feelings also in private life, more violent and familiar. He had brought up and purely loved a charming, well-informed, modest young girl, Esther Johnson, who from infancy had loved and reverenced him alone. She lived with him, he had made her his confidante. From London, during his political struggles, he sent her the full journal of his slightest actions; he wrote to her twice a day, with extreme ease and familiarity, with all the playfulness, vivacity, petting and caressing names of tenderest attachment. Yet another girl, beautiful and rich, Miss Vanhomrigh, attached herself to him, declared her passion, received from him several marks of his own, followed him to Ireland, now jealous, now submissive, but so impassioned, so unhappy, that her letters might have broken a harder heart:

'If you continue to treat me as you do, you will not be made uneasy by me long. . . . I am sure I could have borne the rack much better, than those killing, killing words of you. . . . Oh that you may have but so much regard for me left, that this complaint may touch your soul with pity!'[4]

She pined and died. Esther Johnson, who had so long possessed

[1] By the *Tale of a Tub* with the clergy, and by the *Prophesy of Windsor* with the queen.

[2] *Drapier's Letters, Gulliver's Travels, Rhapsody on Poetry. A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children*, etc., and several pamphlets on Ireland.

[3] Letter to Lord Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 274.

[4] Letter of Miss Vanhomrigh, Dublin, 1714, xix. 421.

Swift's whole heart, suffered still more. All was changed in Swift's house. 'At my first coming (home) I thought I should have died with discontent, and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me.'[1] He found tears, distrust, resentment, cold silence, in place of familiarity and tenderness. He married Miss Johnson from duty, but in secret, and on condition that she should only be his wife in name. She was twelve years dying; Swift went away to England as often as he could. His house was a hell to him; it is thought that some secret cause had influenced his loves and his marriage. Delany, his biographer, having once found him talking with Archbishop King, saw the archbishop in tears, and Swift rushing by, with a countenance full of grief, and a distracted air. 'Sir,' said the prelate, 'you have just met the most unhappy man upon earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question.' Esther Johnson died. Swift's anguish, the spectres by which he was haunted, the horrors in which the remembrance of the two women, slowly ruined and killed by his fault, plunged and bound him, nothing but his end can tell. 'It is time for me to have done with the world . . . and so I would . . . and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole.'[2] Overwork and excess of emotions had made him ill from his youth: he was subject to giddiness; he lost his hearing. He had long felt that reason was deserting him. One day he was observed 'gazing intently at the top of a lofty elm, the head of which had been blasted. Upon his friend's approach, he pointed to it, significantly adding, "I shall be like that tree, and die first at the top."'[3] His memory left him; he received the attentions of others with disgust, sometimes with rage. He lived alone, gloomy, unable to read. They say he passed a year without uttering a word, with a horror of the human face, walking ten hours a day, a maniac, then an idiot. A tumour came on one of his eyes, so that he continued a month without sleeping, and five men were needed to prevent his tearing out the eye with his nails. One of his last words was, 'I am mad.' When his will was opened, it was found that he left his whole fortune to build a madhouse.

II.

These passions and these miseries were necessary to inspire *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*.

A strange and powerful form of mind, too, was necessary, as English as his pride and his passions. Swift has the style of a surgeon and a judge, cold, grave, solid, unadorned, without vivacity or passion, manly and practical. He desired neither to please, nor to divert, nor

[1] *Journal to Stella*, 8th July, 1712. Miss Vanhomrigh died, however, in 1721.

[2] Letter to Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 276

[3] Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 80.

to carry people away, nor to touch; he never hesitated, nor was redundant, nor was excited, nor made an effort. He expressed his thoughts in a uniform tone, with exact, precise, often harsh terms, with familiar comparisons, levelling all within reach of his hand, even the loftiest things—especially the loftiest—with a brutal and always haughty coolness. He knows life as a banker knows accounts; and his total once made up, he scorns or knocks down the babblers who dispute it in his presence.

With the sum total he knows the items. He not only familiarly and vigorously seized on every object, but he also decomposed it, and kept an inventory of its details. His imagination was as minute as it was energetic. He could give you an indictment of dry facts on every event and object, so connected and natural as to deceive one. *Gulliver's Travels* read like a log-book. Isaac Bickerstaff's predictions were taken literally by the inquisition in Portugal. His account of M. du Baudrier seems an authentic translation. He gives to an extravagant romance the air of a genuine history. By this detailed and solid science he imports into literature the positive spirit of men of business and experience. Nothing could be more vigorous, narrow, unhappy, for nothing could be more destructive. No greatness, false or true, can stand before him; whatsoever he fathoms and takes in hand loses at once its prestige and value. Whilst he decomposes he displays the real ugliness, and removes the fictitious beauty of objects. Whilst he brings them to the level of common things, he suppresses their real beauty, and gives them a fictitious ugliness. He presents all their gross features, and nothing but their gross features. Look with him into the physical details of science, religion, state, and with him reduce science, religion, state, to the low standing of every-day events; with him you will see here a Bedlam of shrivelled up dreamers, narrow and chimerical brains, busy in contradicting, heaping up hollow phrases in mouldy books, inventing conjectures, and crying them up for the truth; there, a band of enthusiasts, mumbling phrases which they do not understand, adoring figures of rhetoric as mysteries, attaching holiness or impiety to lawn-sleeves or postures, spending in persecutions or genuflexions the surplus of sheepish or ferocious folly with which an evil fate has crammed their brains; there, again, flocks of idiots pouring out their blood and treasure for the whims or plots of a carriage-drawn aristocrat, out of respect for the carriage which they themselves have given him. What part of human nature or existence can continue great and beautiful, before a mind which, penetrating all details, perceives men eating, sleeping, dressing, in all dull and mean actions, degrading everything to the level of vulgar events, trivial circumstances of dress and cookery? It is not enough for the positive mind to see the springs, pulleys, lamps, and whatever there is objectionable in the opera at which he is present; he makes it more objectionable by calling it a show. It is not enough not to ignore anything; we must also

refuse to admire. He treats things like domestic utensils; after reckoning up their materials, he gives them a vile name. Nature for him is but a caldron, and he knows the proportion and number of the ingredients cooking in it. In this power and this weakness you see beforehand the misanthropy and the talent of Swift.

There are, indeed, but two modes of agreeing with the world: mediocrity of mind and superiority of intelligence—the one for the public and the fools, the other for artists and philosophers: the one consists in seeing nothing, the other in seeing all. You will respect the respectable, if you only see the surface—if you take them as they are, if you let yourself be duped by the fine show which they never fail to present. You will revere the gold-embroidered garments in which your masters bedizen themselves, and you will never dream of examining the stains hidden under the embroidery. You will be moved by the big words which they pronounce in a sublime voice, and you will never see in their pockets the hereditary phrase-book from which they have taken them. You will punctiliously bring them your money and your services; the custom will seem to you just, and you will accept the goose-dogma, that a goose is bound to be roasted. But, on the other hand, you will tolerate and even love the world, if, penetrating to its nature, you take the trouble to explain or imitate its mechanism. You will be interested in passions by an artist's sympathy or a philosopher's comprehension; you will find them natural whilst admitting their force, or you will find them necessary whilst computing their connexion; you will cease to be indignant against the powers which produce fine spectacles, or will cease to be roused by the rebounds which the law of cause and effect had foretold. You will admire the world as a grand drama, or as an invincible development; and you will be preserved by the imagination or by logic from slander or disgust. You will extract from religion the high truths which dogmas hide, and the generous instincts which superstition conceals. You will perceive in the state the infinite benefits which no tyranny abolishes, and the sociable inclinations which no wickedness uproots. You will distinguish in science the solid doctrines which discussion never shakes, the liberal notions which the shock of systems purifies and expands, the splendid promises which the course of the present opens up to the ambition of the future. We can thus escape hatred by the nullity or the greatness of the prospect, by the inability to discover contrasts, or by the power to discover the harmony of contrasts. Raised above the first, sunk beneath the last, seeing evil and disorder, deprived of goodness and order, precluded from love and calmness, resigned to indignation and bitterness, Swift found neither a cause to cherish nor a doctrine to establish;[1] he employs the whole force of an excellently armed mind

[1] In his *Thoughts on Religion* (viii. 73) he says: 'The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed, when it cannot be overcome.' 'I look upon

and an excellently tempered character in denying and destroying: all his works are pamphlets.

III.

At this time, and in his hands, the newspaper in England attained its proper character and its greatest force. Literature entered the sphere of politics. To understand what the one became, we must understand what the other was: art depended upon political business, and the spirit of parties made the spirit of writers.

In France a theory arises—eloquent, harmonious, and generous; the young are enamoured of it, wear a cap and sing songs in its honour: at night, the citizens, whilst digesting their dinner, read it and delight in it; some, hotheaded, accept it, and prove to themselves their force of mind by ridiculing the retrogrades. On the other hand, the established people, prudent and timid, are mistrustful: being well off, they find that everything is well, and demand that kings shall continue as they are. Such are the two parties in France, very old, as all know; not very earnest, as all see. They must talk, be enthusiastic, reason on speculative opinions, glibly, about an hour a day, indulging but outwardly in this taste; but these parties are so well levelled, that they are at bottom all the same: when we understand them rightly, we will find in France only two parties, the men of twenty and the men of forty. English parties, on the other hand, were always compact and living bodies, united by interests of money, rank, and conscience, receiving theories only as standards or as a balance, a sort of secondary States, which, like the old orders in Rome, legally endeavour to monopolise the government. So, the English constitution was never more than a transaction between distinct powers, constrained to tolerate each other, disposed to encroach on each other, occupied in treating with each other. Politics for them are a domestic interest, for the French an occupation of the mind; Englishmen make them a business, the French a discussion.

Thus their pamphlets, notably Swift's, seem to us only half literary. For an argument to be literary, it must not address itself to an interest or a faction, but to the pure mind: it must be based on universal truths, rest on absolute justice, be able to touch all human reasons; otherwise, being local, it is simply useful: nothing is beautiful but what is general. It must also be developed regularly by analysis, and with exact divisions; its distribution must give a picture of pure reason; the order of ideas must be inviolable; every mind must be able to draw thence with ease a complete conviction; its method, its principles, must be sensible throughout, and at all times. The desire to prove well must be added to the art of proving well; the writer

myself, in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by Providence for defending a post assigned me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can

must announce his proof, repeat it, present it under all its faces, desire to penetrate minds, pursue them persistently in all their retreats; but he must treat his hearers like men worthy of comprehending and applying general truths; his discourse must be lively, noble, polished, and eager, so as to suit such subjects and such minds. It is thus that ancient prose and French prose are eloquent, and that political dissertations or religious controversies have endured as models of art.

This good taste and philosophy are wanting in the positive mind; it wishes to attain, not eternal beauty, but present success. Swift does not address men in general, but certain men. He does not speak to reasoners, but to a party; he does not care to teach a truth, but to make an impression; his aim is not to enlighten that isolated part of man, called his mind, but to move the mass of feelings and prejudices which constitute the actual man. Whilst he writes, his public is before his eyes: fat squires, puffed out with port wine and beef, accustomed at the end of their meals to bawl loyally for church and king; gentlemen farmers, bitter against London luxury and the new importance of merchants; ecclesiastics bred on pedantic sermons, and old-established hatred of dissenters and papists. These people have not mind enough to pursue a fine deduction or understand an abstract principle. One must calculate the facts they know, the ideas they have received, the interests that move them, and recall only these facts, reason only from these ideas, set in motion only these interests. It is thus Swift speaks, without development, without logical hits, without rhetorical effects, but with extraordinary force and success, in phrases whose justice his contemporaries inwardly felt, and which they accepted at once, because they simply told them, in a clear form and openly, what they murmured obscurely and to themselves. Such was the power of the *Examiner*, which in one year transformed the opinion of three kingdoms; and particularly of *Drapier's Letters*, which made a government draw back.

Small change was lacking in Ireland, and the English ministers had given William Wood a patent to coin one hundred and eight thousand pounds of copper money. A commission, of which Newton was a member, verified the pieces made, found them good, and several competent judges still think that the measure was loyal and serviceable to the land. Swift roused the people against it, speaking to them in an intelligible style, and triumphed over the common sense and the state.[1]

'Brethren, friends, countrymen, and fellow-subjects, what I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest

[1] Whatever has been said, I do not think that he wrote them in bad faith. It was possible, for Swift more than for another, to believe in a ministerial job He seems to me to have been at bottom an honest man.

concern to you and your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you, as men, as Christians, as parents, and as lovers of your country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others; which that you may do at the less expence, I have ordered the printer to sell it at the lowest rate.'[1]

You see popular distrust spring up at a glance; this is the style which reaches workmen and peasants; this simplicity, these details, are necessary to penetrate their belief. The author is like a draper, and they trust only men of their own condition. Swift goes on to accuse Wood, declaring that his copper pieces are not worth one-eighth of their nominal value. There is no trace of proofs: no proofs are required to convince the people; it is enough to repeat the same accusation again and again, to abound in intelligible examples, to strike eye and ear. The imagination once gained, they will go on shouting, convincing themselves by their own cries, intractably. Swift says to his adversaries:

'Your paragraph relates further that Sir Isaac Newton reported an assay taken at the Tower of Wood's metal; by which it appears that Wood had in all respects performed his contract. His contract! With whom? Was it with the Parliament or people of Ireland? Are not they to be the purchasers? But they detest, abhor, and reject it as corrupt, fraudulent, mingled with dirt and trash.'[2]

And a little farther on:

'His first proposal is, that he will be content to coin no more (than forty thousand pounds), unless *the exigencies of the trade require it*, although his patent empowers him to coin a far greater quantity. . . . To which if I were to answer, it should be thus: let Mr. Wood and his crew of founders and tinkers coin on, till there is not an old kettle left in the kingdom; let them coin old leather, tobacco-pipe clay, or the dirt in the street, and call their trumpery by what name they please, from a guinea to a farthing; we are not under any concern to know how he and his tribe of accomplices think fit to employ themselves. But I hope, and trust, that we are all, to a man, fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his ware.'[3]

Swift gets angry and does not answer. In fact, this is the best way to answer; to move such hearers you must move their blood and their nerves; then shopkeepers and farmers will turn up their sleeves, double their fists; and the good arguments of their opponents will only increase their desire to knock them down.

Now see how a mass of examples makes a gratuitous assertion probable:

'Your Newsletter says that an assay was made of the coin. How impudent and insupportable is this! Wood takes care to coin a dozen or two halfpence of good metal, sends them to the Tower, and they are approved; and these must answer all that he has already coined, or shall coin for the future. It is true, indeed, that a gentleman often sends to my shop for a pattern of stuff; I cut it

[1] *Drapier's Letters*, vii.; Letter 1, 97.
[2] *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 114.
[3] *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 115.

fairly off, and if he likes it, he comes or sends and compares the pattern with the whole piece, and probably we come to a bargain. But if I were to buy a hundred sheep, and the grazier should bring me one single wether, fat and well fleeced, by way of pattern, and expect the same price round for the whole hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was paid, or giving me good security to restore my money for those that were lean, or shorn, or scabby, I would be none of his customer. I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house, and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket, which he showed as a pattern to encourage purchasers ; and this is directly the case in point with Mr. Wood's assay.'[1]

A burst of laughter follows ; butchers and bricklayers were gained over. To finish, Swift showed them a practical expedient, suited to their understanding and their condition :

'The common soldier, when he goes to the market or ale house, will offer his money ; and if it be refused, perhaps he will swagger and hector, and threaten to beat the butcher or alewife, or take the goods by force, and throw them the bad half-pence. In this and the like cases, the shopkeeper or victualler, or any other tradesman, has no more to do than to demand ten times the price of his goods, if it is to be paid in Wood's money ; for example, twenty-pence of that money for a quart of ale, and so in all things else, and never part with his goods till he gets the money.'[2]

Public clamour overcame the English Government ; they withdrew the money and paid Wood a large indemnity. Such is the merit of Swift's arguments ; good tools, trenchant and handy, neither elegant nor bright, but whose value is proved by their effect.

The whole beauty of these pamphlets is in their tone. They have neither the generous fire of Pascal, nor the bewildering gaiety of Beaumarchais, nor the chiselled delicacy of Paul Louis Courier, but an overwhelming air of superiority and a bitter and terrible rancour. Vast passion and pride, like the positive Drapier's mind just now described, have given all the blows their force. You should read his *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, against Steele. Page by page Steele is torn to pieces with a calmness and scorn never equalled. Swift approaches regularly, leaving no part unwounded, heaping wound on wound, every blow sure, knowing beforehand their reach and depth. Poor Steele, a vain, thoughtless fellow, is in his hands like Gulliver amongst the giants ; it is a pity to see a contest so unequal ; and this contest is pitiless. Swift crushes him carefully and easily, like an obnoxious animal. The unfortunate man, an old officer and semi-literary man, had made awkward use of constitutional words :

'Upon this rock the author . . . is perpetually splitting, as often as he ventures out beyond the narrow bounds of his literature. He has a confused remembrance of words since he left the university, but has lost half their meaning, and puts them together with no regard, except to their cadence ; as I

[1] *Drapier's Letters*, vii. ; Letter 2, 114.

[2] *Ibid.* vii. ; Letter 1, 101.

remember, a fellow nailed up maps in a gentleman's closet, some sidelong, others upside down, the better to adjust them to the pannels.'[1]

When he judges he is worse than when he proves; witness his *Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton.* He pierces him with the formulas of official politeness; only an Englishman is capable of such phlegm and such haughtiness:

'I have had the honour of much conversation with his lordship, and am thoroughly convinced how indifferent he is to applause, and how insensible of reproach. . . . He is without the sense of shame, or glory, as some men are without the sense of smelling; and therefore, a good name to him is no more than a precious ointment would be to these. Whoever, for the sake of others, were to describe the nature of a serpent, a wolf, a crocodile or a fox, must be understood to do it without any personal love or hatred for the animals themselves. In the same manner his excellency is one whom I neither personally love nor hate. I see him at court, at his own house, and sometimes at mine, for I have the honour of his visits; and when these papers are public, it is odds but he will tell me, as he once did upon a like occasion, "that he is damnably mauled," and then, with the easiest transition in the world, ask about the weather, or time of the day; so that I enter on the work with more cheerfulness, because I am sure neither to make him angry, nor any way hurt his reputation; a pitch of happiness and security to which his excellency has arrived, and which no philosopher before him could reach. Thomas, Earl of Wharton, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, by the force of a wonderful constitution, has some years passed his grand climacteric without any visible effects of old age, either on his body or his mind; and in spite of a continual prostitution to those vices which usually wear out both. . . . Whether he walks or whistles, or swears, or talks bawdy, or calls names, he acquits himself in each, beyond a templar of three years standing. With the same grace, and in the same style, he will rattle his coachman in the midst of the street, where he is governor of the kingdom; and all this is without consequence, because it is his character, and what everybody expects. . . . The ends he has gained by lying, appear to be more owing to the frequency, than the art of them; his lies being sometimes detected in an hour, often in a day, and always in a week. . . . He swears solemnly he loves and will serve you; and your back is no sooner turned, but he tells those about him, you are a dog and a rascal. He goes constantly to prayers in the forms of his place, and will talk bawdy and blasphemy at the chapel door. He is a presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion; but he chooses at present to whore with a papist. In his commerce with mankind, his general rule is, to endeavour to impose on their understandings, for which he has but one receipt, a composition of lies and oaths. . . . He bears the gallantries of his lady with the indifference of a stoick; and thinks them well recompensed, by a return of children to support his family, without the fatigues of being a father. . . . He was never yet known to refuse or keep a promise, as I remember he told a lady, but with an exception to the promise he then made (which was to get her a pension), yet he broke even that, and, I confess, deceived us both. But here I desire to distinguish between a promise and a bargain; for he will be sure to keep

[1] *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, iv. 405. See also in the *Examiner* the pamphlet against Marlborough under the name of Crassus, and the comparison between Roman generosity and English meanness.

the latter, when he has the fairest offer. . . . But here I must desire the reader's pardon, if I cannot digest the following facts in so good a manner as I intended; because it is thought expedient, for some reasons, that the world should be informed of his excellency's merits as soon as possible. . . . As they are, they may serve for hints to any person who may hereafter have a mind to write memoirs of his excellency's life.'[1]

Throughout this piece Swift's voice has remained calm; not a muscle of his face has moved; no smile, flash of the eye, gesture; he speaks like a statue; but his anger grows by constraint, and burns the more that it shines the less

This is why his ordinary style is grave irony. It is the weapon of pride, meditation, and force. The man who employs it is self-contained in the height of the storm within; he is too proud to make a show of his passion; he does not take the public into his confidence; he elects to be solitary in his soul; he would be ashamed to surrender; he means and knows how to keep absolute possession of himself. Thus collected, he understands better and suffers more; no fit of passion relieves his wrath or draws away his attention; he feels all the points and penetrates to the depths of the opinion which he detests; he multiplies his pain and his knowledge, and spares himself neither wound nor reflection. We must see Swift in this attitude, impassible in appearance, but with stiffening muscles, a heart scorched with hatred, writing with a terrible smile such pamphlets as this:

'It may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent, to argue against the abolishing of Christianity, at a juncture, when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point. . . . However, I know not how, whether from the affectation of singularity, or the perverseness of human nature, but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this opinion. Nay, though I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the attorney-general, I should still confess, that in the present posture of our affairs, at home or abroad, I do not yet see the absolute necessity of extirpating the Christian religion from among us. This perhaps may appear too great a paradox, even for our wise and paradoxical age to endure; therefore I shall handle it with all tenderness, and with the utmost deference to that great and profound majority, which is of another sentiment. . . . I hope no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defence of real Christianity, such as used, in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages), to have an influence upon men's belief and actions; to offer at the restoring of that, would indeed be a wild project; it would be to dig up foundations; to destroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom. . . . Every candid reader will easily understand my discourse to be intended only in defence of nominal Christianity; the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general consent, as utterly inconsistent with our present schemes of wealth and power.'[2]

[1] Swift's Works, iv. 148.

[2] *An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity might be attended with some Inconveniences*, viii. 184. The Whigs were herein attacked as the friends of freethinkers.

Let us then examine the advantages which this abolition of the title and name of Christian might have:

'It is likewise urged, that there are, by computation, in this kingdom above ten thousand parsons, whose revenues, added to those of my lords the bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young gentlemen of wit and pleasure, and freethinking, enemies to priestcraft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices, who might be an ornament to the court and town.'[1]

'It is likewise proposed as a great advantage to the public that if we once discard the system of the gospel, all religion will of course be banished for ever; and consequently along with it, those grievous prejudices of education, which under the names of virtue, conscience, honour, justice, and the like, are so apt to disturb the peace of human minds, and the notions whereof are so hard to be eradicated, by right reason, or free-thinking.'[2]

Then he concludes by doubling the insult:

'I am very sensible how much the gentlemen of wit and pleasure are apt to murmur, and be shocked at the sight of so many daggled-tail parsons, who happen to fall in their way, and offend their eyes; but at the same time, those wise reformers do not consider, what an advantage and felicity it is, for great wits to be always provided with objects of scorn and contempt, in order to exercise and improve their talents, and divert their spleen from falling on each other, or on themselves; especially when all this may be done, without the least imaginable danger to their persons. And to urge another argument of a parallel nature: if Christianity were once abolished, how could the freethinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject, so calculated in all points whereon to display their abilities? What wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of, from those, whose genius, by continual practice, has been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives, against religion, and would, therefore, never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other subject? We are daily complaining of the great decline of wit among us, and would we take away the greatest, perhaps the only topic we have left?'[3]

'I do very much apprehend, that in six months time after the act is passed for the extirpation of the gospel, the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And since that is fifty more, than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture, for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason we should be at so great a loss, merely for the sake of destroying it.'[4]

Swift is only a combatant, I admit; but when we see at a glance this common sense and this pride, this empire over the passions of others, and this empire over himself, this force of hatred, and this employment of hatred, we judge that there have rarely been such combatants. He is a pamphleteer as Hannibal was a *condottiere*.

IV.

On the night after the battle we usually unbend; we sport, we make fun, we talk in prose and verse; but this night is a continuation of the day, and the mind which leaves its trace in matters of business leaves its trace in amusements.

[1] *An Argument*, etc., 188. [2] *Ibid.* 192. [3] *Ibid.* 196.
[4] " " 200; final words of the *Argument*.

What is gayer than Voltaire's *soirées*? He rails; but do you find any murderous intention in his railleries? He gets angry; but do you perceive a malignant or evil character in his passions? In him all is amiable. In an instant, through the necessity of action, he strikes, caresses, changes a hundred times his tone, his face, with abrupt movements, impetuous sallies, sometimes as a child, always as a man of the world, of taste and conversation. He wishes to entertain me; he conducts me at once through a thousand ideas, without effort, to amuse himself, to amuse me. The agreeable host who desires to please and who knows how to please, who only dreads ennui, who does not distrust me, who is not constrained, who is always himself, who sparkles with ideas, naturalness, sportiveness? If I was with him, and he rallied me, I should not be angry; I should fall into his tone, I should laugh at myself, I should feel that he only wished to pass an agreeable hour, that he did not mean it, that he treated me as an equal and a guest, that he broke out into pleasantries as a winter fire into sparks, and that he was none the less pleasant, wholesome, amusing.

Heaven grant that Swift may never jest at my expense. The positive mind is too solid and too dry to be gay and amiable. When he takes to ridicule, he does not sport with it superficially, he studies it; he goes into it gravely, masters it, knows all its subdivisions and its proofs. This deep knowledge can only produce a withering pleasantry. Swift's, at bottom, is but a *reductio ad absurdum*, altogether scientific. For instance, *The Art of Political Lying*[1] is a didactic treatise, whose plan might serve for a model. 'In the first chapter of this excellent treatise he (the author) reasons philosophically concerning the nature of the soul of man, and those qualities which render it susceptible of lies. He supposes the soul to be of the nature of a pleno-cylindrical speculum, or looking-glass. . . . The plain side represents objects just as they are; and the cylindrical side, by the rule of catoptrics, must needs represent true objects false, and false objects true. In his second chapter he treats of the nature of political lying; in the third of the lawfulness of political lying. The fourth chapter is wholly employed in this question, "Whether the right of coinage of political lies be wholly in the government."' Again, nothing could be stranger, more worthy of an archæological society, than the argument in which he convicts a humorous piece of Pope's[2] as an insidious pamphlet against the religion of the state. His *Art of Sinking in Poetry*[3] has all the appearance of good rhetoric; the principles are laid down, the divisions justified; the examples chosen with extraordinary precision and method; it is perfect reason employed in the service of folly.

His passions, like his mind, were too strong. If he wishes to scratch, he tears; his pleasantry is gloomy; by way of a joke, he drags his

[1] Arbuthnot is said to have written the whole or at least part of it.—Tr.

[2] *The Rape of the Lock.* [3] Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift wrote it together

reader through all the disgusting details of sickness and death. An old shoemaker, Partridge, had turned astrologer; Swift, imperturbably cool, assumes an astrologer's title, writes maxims on the duties of the profession, and to inspire confidence, begins to predict:

'My first prediction is but a trifle; yet I will mention it, to show how ignorant those sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack-maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time.'[1]

The 29th of March being past, he relates how the undertaker came to hang Partridge's rooms 'in close mourning;' then Ned, the sexton, asking 'whether the grave is to be plain or bricked;' then Mr. White, the carpenter, to screw down the coffin; then the stone-cutter with his monument. Lastly, a successor comes and sets up in the neighbourhood, saying in his printed directions, 'that he lives in the house of the late ingenious Mr. John Partridge, an eminent practitioner in leather, physic, and astrology.'[2] You may tell beforehand the protestations of poor Partridge. Swift in his reply proves that he is dead, and is astonished at his hard words:

'To call a man a fool and villain, an impudent fellow, only for differing from him in a point merely speculative, is, in my humble opinion, a very improper style for a person of his education. . . . I will appeal to Mr. Partridge himself, whether it be probable I could have been so indiscreet, to begin my predictions, with the only falsehood that ever was pretended to be in them? and this in an affair at home.'[3]

Mr. Partridge is mistaken, or deceives the public, or would cheat his heirs. This gloomy pleasantry becomes elsewhere still more gloomy. Swift pretends that his enemy, the bookseller Curll, has just been poisoned, and relates his agony. A house-surgeon of a hospital would not write a more repulsive diary more coldly. The details, worked out with the completeness of a Hogarth, are admirably minute, but disgusting. We laugh, or rather we grin, as before the vagaries of a madman in an asylum. Swift in his gaiety is always tragical; nothing unbends him; even when he serves, he pains you. In his *Journal to Stella* there is a sort of imperious austerity; his compliments are those of a master to a child. The charm and happiness of a young girl of sixteen cannot soften him. She has just married, and he tells her that love is a 'ridiculous passion, which has no being but in playbooks and romances;' then he adds, with perfect brutality:

[1] *Predictions for the Year* 1708 *by Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 156.

[2] These quotations are taken from a humorous pamphlet, *Squire Bickerstaff Detected*, written by Dr. Yalden. See Swift's Works, ix. 176.—Tr.

[3] *A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 186.

'I never yet knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her sex; . . . your sex employ more thought, memory, and application to be fools than would serve to make them wise and useful. . . . When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be human creatures, but a sort of species hardly a degree above a monkey; who has more diverting tricks than any of you, is an animal less mischievous and expensive, might in time be a tolerable critic in velvet and brocade, and, for aught I know, would equally become them.'[1]

Will poetry calm such a mind? Here, as elsewhere, he is most unfortunate. He is excluded from great transports of imagination, as well as from the lively digressions of conversation. He can attain neither the sublime nor the agreeable; he has neither the artist's rapture, nor the entertainment of the man of the world. Two similar sounds at the end of two equal lines have always consoled the greatest troubles: the old muse, after three thousand years, is a young and divine nurse; and her song lulls the sickly natures whom she still visits, like the young, flourishing races amongst whom she has appeared. The involuntary music, in which thought wraps itself, hides ugliness and unveils nature. Feverish man, after the labours of the evening and the anguish of the night, sees at morning the beaming whiteness of the opening heaven; he gets rid of himself, and the joy of nature from all sides enters with oblivion into his heart. If misery pursues him, the poetic afflatus, unable to wipe it out, transforms it; it becomes ennobled, he loves it, and thenceforth he bears it; for the only thing to which he cannot resign himself is littleness. Neither Faust nor Manfred have exhausted human grief; they drank from the cruel cup a generous wine, they did not reach the dregs. They enjoyed themselves and nature; they tasted the greatness which was in them, and the beauty of creation; they pressed with their bruised hands all the thorns with which necessity has made our way thorny, but they saw them blossom with roses, fostered by the purest of their noble blood. There is nothing of the sort in Swift: what is wanting most in his verses is poetry. The positive mind can neither love nor understand it; it sees therein only a machine or a fashion, and employs it only for vanity and conventionality. When in his youth he attempted Pindaric odes, he failed lamentably. I cannot remember a line of his which indicates a genuine sentiment of nature: he saw in the forests only logs of wood, and in the fields only sacks of corn. He employed mythology, as we put on a wig, ill-timed, wearily and scornfully. His best piece, *Cadenus and Vanessa*,[2] is a poor, threadbare allegory. To praise Vanessa, he supposes that the nymphs and shepherds pleaded before Venus, the first against men, the second against women; and that Venus, wishing to end the debates, made in Vanessa a model of perfection. What can such a conception furnish but flat apostrophes and pedantic comparisons? Sw

[1] *Letter to a very young Lady on her Marriage*, ix. 420.

[2] *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 441.

somewhere gives a recipe for an epic poem, is here the first to make use of it. And even his rude prosaic freaks tear this Greek frippery at every turn. He puts a legal procedure into heaven; he makes Venus use all kinds of technical terms. He introduces witnesses, 'questions on the fact, bill with costs dismiss'd.' They talk so loud that the goddess fears to lose her influence, to be driven from Olympus, to be

> 'Shut out from heaven and earth,
> Fly to the sea, my place of birth:
> There live with daggled mermaids pent,
> And keep on fish perpetual Lent.'

When elsewhere he relates the touching history of *Baucis and Philemon*,[1] he degrades it by a travesty. He does not love the ancient nobleness and beauty; the two gods become in his hands begging friars, Philemon and Baucis Kentish peasants. For a recompense, their house becomes a church, and Philemon a parson:

> 'His talk was now of tithes and dues;
> He smok'd his pipe and read the news. . . .
> Against dissenters would repine,
> And stood up firm for "right divine."'

Wit luxuriates, incisive, in little compact verses, vigorously coined, of extreme conciseness, facility, precision; but compared to La Fontaine, it is wine turned vinegar. Even when he comes to the charming Vanessa, his vein is still the same: to praise her childhood, he puts her name first on the list, as a little model girl, just like a schoolmaster:

> 'And all their conduct would be tried
> By her, as an unerring guide:
> Offending daughters oft would hear
> Vanessa's praise rung in their ear:
> Miss Betty, when she does a fault,
> Lets fall her knife, or spills the salt,
> Will thus be by her mother chid:
> "'Tis what Vanessa never did!"'[2]

A strange way of admiring Vanessa, and of proving his admiration for her. He calls her a nymph, and treats her like a school-girl! Cadenus 'now could praise, esteem, approve, but understood not what was love!' Nothing could be truer, and Stella felt it, like others. The verses which he writes every year on her birthday, are a pedagogue's censures and praises; if he gives her any good marks, it is with restrictions. Once he inflicts on her a little sermon on want of patience; again, by way of compliment, he concocts this delicate warning:

> 'Stella, this day is thirty-four
> (We shan't dispute a year or more).
> However, Stella, be not troubled,
> Although thy size and years are doubled

[1] *Baucis and Philemon*, xiv 83. [2] *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 448.

Since first I saw thee at sixteen,
The brightest virgin on the green;
So little is thy form declin'd,
Made up so largely in thy mind.'

And he insists with exquisite taste:

'O, would it please the gods to split
Thy beauty, size, and years and wit!
No age could furnish out a pair
Of nymphs so graceful, wise, and fair.' [1]

Decidedly this man is an artisan, strong of arm, terrible at his work and in a fray, but narrow of soul, treating a woman as if she were a beam. Rhyme and rhythm are only business-like tools, which have served him to press and launch his thought; he has put nothing but prose into them: poetry was too fine to be grasped by those coarse hands.

But in prosaic subjects, what truth and force! How this masculine nakedness crushes the artificial poetry of Addison and Pope! There are no epithets; he leaves his thought as he conceived it, valuing it for and by itself, needing neither ornaments, nor preparation, nor extension; above the tricks of the profession, scholastic conventionalisms, the vanity of the rhymester, the difficulties of the art; master of his subject and of himself. This simplicity and naturalness astonish us in verse. Here, as elsewhere, his originality is entire, and his genius creative; he surpasses his classical and timid age; he tyrannises over form, breaks it, dare utter anything, spares himself no strong word. Acknowledge the greatness of this invention and audacity; he alone is a superior, who finds everything and copies nothing. What a biting comicality in the *Grand Question Debated!* He has to represent the entrance of a captain into a castle, his airs, his insolence, his folly, and the admiration caused by these qualities! The lady serves him first; the servants stare at him:

'The parsons for envy are ready to burst;
The servants amaz'd are scarce ever able
To keep off their eyes, as they wait at the table;
And Molly and I have thrust in our nose
To peep at the captain in all his fine clothes.
Dear madam, be sure he's a fine spoken man,
Do but hear on the clergy how glib his tongue ran;
"And madam," says he, "if such dinners you give,
You'll ne'er want for parsons as long as you live.
I ne'er knew a parson without a good nose;
But the devil's as welcome wherever he goes;
G—d—me! they bid us reform and repent,
But, z—s! by their looks they never keep Lent:

[1] *Verses on Stella's Birthday*, March 13, 1718–19, xiv. 469.

Mister curate, for all your grave looks, I'm afraid
You cast a sheep's eye on her ladyship's maid:
I wish she would lend you her pretty white hand
In mending your cassock, and smoothing your band"
(For the dean was so shabby, and look'd like a ninny,
That the captain suppos'd he was curate to Jinny).
"Whenever you see a cassock and gown,
A hundred to one but it covers a clown.
Observe how a parson comes into a room,
G—d—me, he hobbles as bad as my groom;
A scholard, when just from his college broke loose,
Can hardly tell how to cry bo to a goose;
Your *Noveds*, and *Bluturks*, and *Omurs*,[1] and stuff,
By G—, they don't signify this pinch of snuff;
To give a young gentleman right education,
The army's the only good school in the nation."[2]

This has been *seen*, and herein lies the beauty of Swift's verses: they are personal; they are not developed themes, but impressions felt and observations collected. Read *The Journal of a Modern Lady*, *The Furniture of a Lady's Mind*, and other pieces by the dozen: they are dialogues transcribed or opinions put on paper after quitting a drawing-room. *The Progress of Marriage* represents a dean of fifty-two married to a young worldly coquette; do you not see in this title alone all the fears of the bachelor of St. Patrick's? What diary is more familiar and more pungent than his verses on his own death?

"He hardly breathes." "The Dean is dead."
Before the passing bell begun,
The news through half the town has run;
"O may we all for death prepare!
What has he left? and who's his heir?"
"I know no more than what the news is;
'Tis all bequeath'd to public uses."
"To public uses! there's a whim!
What had the public done for him?
Mere envy, avarice, and pride:
He gave it all—but first he died.
And had the Dean in all the nation
No worthy friend, no poor relation?
So ready to do strangers good,
Forgetting his own flesh and blood!" . . .
Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day. . . .
My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learn'd to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps:
The Dean is dead (pray what is trumps?)
Then, Lord, have mercy on his soul!
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)

[1] Ovids, Plutarchs, Homers. [2] *The Grand Question Debated*, xv. 153.

Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall.
(I wish I knew what king to call.)
Madam, your husband will attend
The funeral of so good a friend?
No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight,
And he's engaged to-morrow night;
My Lady Club will take it ill,
If he should fail her at quadrille.
He lov'd the Dean—(I lead a heart),
But dearest friends, they say, must part.
His time was come: he ran his race;
We hope he's in a better place.'[1]

Such is the inventory of human friendships. All poetry exalts the mind, but this depresses it; instead of concealing reality, it unveils it; instead of creating illusions, it removes them. When he wishes to give a *description of the morning*,[2] he shows us the street-sweepers, the 'watchful bailiffs,' and imitates the different street cries. When he wishes to paint the rain,[3] he describes 'filth of all hues and odours,' the 'swelling kennels,' the 'dead cats,' 'turnip-tops,' 'stinking sprats,' which 'come tumbling down the flood.' His long verses whirl all this filth in their eddies. We smile to see poetry degraded to this use; we seem to be at a masquerade; it is a queen travestied into a rough country girl. We stop, we look on, with the sort of pleasure we feel in drinking a bitter draught. Truth is always good to know, and in the splendid piece which artists show us, we need a manager to tell us the number of the hired applauders and of the supernumeraries.

It would be well if he only drew up such a list! Numbers look ugly, but they only affect the mind; other things, the oil of the lamps, the odours of the side scenes, all that we cannot name, remains to be told. I cannot do more than hint at the length to which Swift carries us; but this I must do, for these extremes are the supreme effort of his despair and his genius: we must touch upon them in order to measure and know him. He drags poetry not only through the mud, but into the filth; he rolls in it like a raging madman, he enthrones himself in it, and bespatters all passers-by. Compared with his, all foul words are decent and agreeable. In Aretin and Brantôme, in La Fontaine and Voltaire, there is a suspicion of pleasure. With the first unchecked sensuality, with the others malicious gaiety, are excuses; we are scandalised, not disgusted; we do not like to see in a man a bull's fury or an ape's buffoonery; but the bull is so eager and strong, the ape so spirited and smart, that we end by looking on or being amused. Then, again, however coarse the pictures may be, they speak of the accompaniments of love; Swift touches only upon the results of digestion, and that only with disgust and revenge; he pours them out

[1] *On the Death of Dr. Swift*, xiv. 331.
[2] Swift's Works, xiv. 93.
[3] *A Description of a City Shower*, xiv 94.

with horror and sneering at the wretches whom he describes. He must not in this be compared to Rabelais: that good giant, that drunken doctor, rolls himself joyously about on his dunghill, thinking no evil; the dunghill is warm, convenient, a fine place to philosophise and sleep off one's wine. Raised to this enormity, and enjoyed with this heedlessness, the bodily functions become poetical. When the casks are emptied down his throat, and the viands are gorged, we sympathise with so much bodily comfort; in the heavings of this colossal belly and the laughter of this homeric mouth, we see, as through a mist, the relics of bacchanal religions, the fecundity, the monstrous joy of nature; these are the splendours and disorders of its first births. The cruel positive mind, on the contrary, clings only to vileness; it will only see what is behind things; armed with sorrow and boldness, it spares no ignoble detail, no obscene word. Swift enters the dressing-room,[1] relates the disenchantments of love,[2] dishonours it by a medley of drugs and physic,[3] describes the cosmetics and a great many more things.[4] He takes his evening walk by solitary walls,[5] and in these pitiable pryings has his microscope ever in his hand. Judge what he sees and suffers; this is his ideal beauty and his jesting conversation, and you may fancy that he has for philosophy, as for poetry and politics, execration and disgust.

V.

He wrote the *Tale of a Tub* at Sir W. Temple's, amidst all kind of reading, as an abstract of truth and science. Hence this tale is the satire of all science and all truth.

Of religion first. He seems here to defend the Church of England; but what church and what creed are not involved in his attack? To enliven his subject, he profanes and reduces questions of dogma to a question of clothes. A father had three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack; he left each of them a coat at his death,[6] warning them to wear it clean and brush it often. The three brothers obeyed for some time, and travelled sensibly, slaying 'a reasonable quantity of giants and dragons.'[7] Unfortunately, having come up to a town, they adopted its manners, fell in love with several fashionable ladies, the Duchess d'Argent, Madame de Grands Titres, and the Countess d'Orgueil,[8] and to gain their favours, began to live as gallants, taking snuff, swearing, rhyming, and contracting debts, keeping horses, fighting duels, whoring, killing bailiffs. A sect was established who

'Held the universe to be a large suit of clothes, which invests everything: that the earth is invested by the air; the air is invested by the stars, and the stars

[1] *The Lady's Dressing-room.* [2] *Strephon and Chloe.*
[3] *A Love Poem from a Physician.* [4] *The Progress of Beauty.*
[5] *The Problem,* and *The Examination of Certain Abuses.*
[6] Christian truth. [7] Persecutions and contests of the primitive church.
[8] Covetousness, ambition, and pride; the three vices that the ancient fathers inveighed against.

are invested by the primum mobile. . . . What is that which some call land, but a fine coat faced with green? or the sea, but a waistcoat of water-tabby? . . . You will find how curious journeyman Nature has been, to trim up the vegetable beaux: observe how sparkish a periwig adorns the head of a beech, and what a fine doublet of white sattin is worn by the birch. . . . Is not religion a cloak; honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt; and conscience a pair of breeches; which, though a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipt down for the service of both? . . . If certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black sattin, we entitle a bishop.'[1]

Others held also 'that the soul was the outward, and the body the inward clothing. . . . This last they proved by Scripture, because in them we live, and move, and have our being.' Thus our three brothers, having only very simple clothes, were embarrassed. For instance, the fashion at this time was for shoulder-knots, and their father's will expressly forbade them to 'add to or diminish from their coats one thread:'

'In this unhappy case they went immediately to consult their father's will, read it over and over, but not a word of the shoulder-knot. . . . After much thought, one of the brothers, who happened to be more book-learned than the other two, said, he had found an expedient. "It is true," said he, "there is nothing in this will, *totidem verbis*, making mention of Shoulder-Knot; but I dare conjecture, we may find them inclusive, or *totidem syllabis*." This distinction was immediately approved by all; and so they fell again to examine; but their evil star had so directed the matter, that the first syllable was not to be found in the whole writings. Upon which disappointment, he, who found the former evasion, took heart and said: "Brothers, there are yet hopes, for though we cannot find them *totidem verbis*, nor *totidem syllabis*, I dare engage we shall make them out *tertio modo*, or *totidem litteris*." This discovery was also highly commended; upon which they fell once more to the scrutiny, and picked out S, H, O, U, L, D, E, R; when the same planet, enemy to their repose, had wonderfully contrived that a K was not to be found. Here was a weighty difficulty; but the distinguishing brother . . . now his hand was in, proved by a very good argument, that K was a modern illegitimate letter, unknown to the learned ages, nor anywhere to be found in ancient manuscripts. . . . Upon this all farther difficulty vanished; shoulder-knots were made clearly out to be *jure paterno*, and our three gentlemen swaggered with as large and flaunting ones as the best.'[2]

Other interpretations admitted gold lace, and a codicil authorised flame-coloured satin linings:

'Next winter a player, hired for the purpose by the corporation of fringe-makers, acted his part in a new comedy, all covered with silver fringe, and according to the laudable custom gave rise to that fashion. Upon which the brothers consulting their father's will, to their great astonishment found these words: "Item, I charge and command my said three sons to wear no sort of silver-fringe upon or about their said coats," etc. . . . However, after some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author, which he said should be nameless, that the same word, which

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, xi. sec. 2, 79

[2] *Ibid.* 83.

in the will is called fringe, does also signify a broomstick: and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This another of the brothers disliked, because of that epithet silver, which could not, he humbly conceived, in propriety of speech, be reasonably applied to a broomstick; but it was replied upon him that this epithet was understood in a mythological and allegorical sense. However, he objected again, why their father should forbid them to wear a broomstick on their coats, a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which, he was taken up short, as one who spoke irreverently of a mystery, which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into, or nicely reasoned upon.'[1]

In the end the scholastic brother grew weary of searching farther 'evasions,' locked up the old will in a strong box, authorised by tradition the fashions which became him, and having contrived to be left a legacy, styled himself My Lord Peter. His brothers, treated like servants, were discarded from his house; they reopened the will of their father, and began to understand it. Martin the Anglican, to reduce his clothes to the primitive simplicity, brought off a large handful of points, stripped away ten dozen yards of fringe, rid his coat of a huge quantity of gold-lace, but kept a few embroideries, which could not 'be got away without damaging the cloth.' Jack the Puritan tore off all in his enthusiasm, and was found in tatters, moreover envious of Martin, and half mad. He then joined the Æolists, or inspired admirers of the wind, who pretend that the spirit, or breath, or wind, is heavenly, and contains all knowledge:

'First, it is generally affirmed or confessed that learning puffeth men up; and secondly they proved it by the following syllogism: words are but wind; and learning is nothing but words; ergo learning is nothing but wind. . . . This, when blown up to its perfection, ought not to be covetously hoarded up, stifled, or hid under a bushel, but freely communicated to mankind. Upon these reasons, and others of equal weight, the wise Æolists affirm the gift of belching to be the noblest act of a rational creature. . . . At certain seasons of the year, you might behold the priests among them in vast number . . . linked together in a circular chain, with every man a pair of bellows applied to his neighbour's breech, by which they blew each other to the shape and size of a tun; and for that reason with great propriety of speech, did usually call their bodies their vessels.'[2]

After this explanation of theology, religious quarrels, and mystical inspirations, what is left, even of the Anglican Church? She is a sensible, useful, political cloak, but what else? Like a brush used with too strong a hand, the buffoonery has carried away the cloth as well as the stain. Swift has put out a fire, I allow; but, like Gulliver at Lilliput, the people saved by him must hold their nose, to admire the right application of the liquid, and the energy of the engine that saves them.

Religion drowned, he turns against science; for the digressions with which he interrupts his story to confute and mock the modern

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, 88. [2] *Ibid.* sec. 9, 146.

sages are attached to his tale by the slenderest ties. The book opens with introductions, prefaces, dedications, and other appendices generally employed to swell books—violent caricatures heaped up against the vanity and prolixity of authors. He professes himself one of them, and announces their discoveries. Admirable discoveries! The first of their commentaries will be on

'*Tom Thumb*, whose author was a Pythagorean philosopher. This dark treatise contains the whole scheme of the Metempsychosis, deducing the progress of the soul through all her stages. *Whittington and his Cat* is the work of that mysterious rabbi Jehuda Hannasi, containing a defence of the Gemara of the Jerusalem Misna, and its just preference to that of Babylon, contrary to the vulgar opinion.'[1]

He himself announces that he is going to publish 'A Panegyrical Essay upon the Number Three; a General History of Ears; a Modest Defence of the Proceedings of the Rabble in all Ages; an Essay on the Art of Canting, philosophically, physically, and musically considered;' and he engages his readers to try by their solicitations to get from him these treatises, which will change the appearance of the world. Then, turning against the philosophers and the critics, sifters of texts, he proves to them, according to their own fashion, that the ancients mentioned them. Can we find anywhere a more biting parody on forced interpretations:

'The types are so apposite and the applications so necessary and natural, that it is not easy to conceive how any reader of a modern age or taste could overlook them. . . . For first; Pausanias is of an opinion, that the perfection of writing correct was entirely owing to the institution of critics; and, that he can possibly mean no other than the true critic is, I think, manifest from the following description. He says, they were a race of men, who delighted to nibble at the superfluities and excrescences of books; which the learned at length observing, took warning, of their own accord, to lop the luxuriant, the rotten, the dead, the sapless, and the overgrown branches from their works. But now, all this he cunningly shades under the following allegory: that the Nauplians in Argos learned the art of pruning their vines, by observing that when an ass had browsed upon one of them, it thrived the better, and bore fairer fruits. Herodotus, holding the very same hieroglyph, speaks much plainer, and almost *in terminis*. He has been so bold as to tax the true critics of ignorance and malice; telling us openly, for I think nothing can be plainer, that in the western part of Libya, there were asses with horns.'[2]

Then follow a multitude of pitiless sarcasms. Swift has the genius of insult; he is an inventor of irony, as Shakspeare of poetry; and as beseems an extreme force, he goes to extremes in his thought and art. He lashes reason after science, and leaves nothing of the whole human mind. With a medical seriousness he establishes that vapours are exhaled from the whole body, which, 'getting possession of the brain,' leave it healthy if they are not abundant, but excite it if they

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, Introduction, 72.

[2] *Ibid.* sec. 3; *A Digression concerning Critics*, 97.

are; that in the first case they make peaceful individuals, in the second great politicians, founders of religions, and deep philosophers, that is, fools, so that folly is the source of all human genius and all the institutions of the universe. This is why it is very wrong to keep men shut up in Bedlam, and a commission appointed to examine them would find in this academy imprisoned geniuses 'which might produce admirable instruments for the several offices in a state ecclesiastical, civil, and military.'

'Is any student tearing his straw in piece-meal, swearing and blaspheming, biting his grate, foaming at the mouth? . . . let the right worshipful commissioners of inspection give him a regiment of dragoons, and send him into Flanders among the rest. . . . You will find a third gravely taking the dimensions of his kennel; a person of foresight and insight, though kept quite in the dark. . . . He walks duly in one pace . . . talks much of hard times and taxes and the whore of Babylon; bars up the wooden window of his cell constantly at eight o'clock, dreams of fire. . . . Now what a figure would all those acquirements amount to if the owner were sent into the city among his brethren! Now is it not amazing to think the society of Warwick-lane should have no more concern for the recovery of so useful a member? . . . I shall not descend so minutely, as to insist upon the vast number of beaux, fiddlers, poets, and politicians that the world might recover by such a reformation. . . . Even I myself, the author of these momentous truths, am a person whose imaginations are hard-mouthed, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his reason, which I have observed, from long experience, to be a very light rider, and easily shaken off; upon which account my friends will never trust me alone, without a solemn promise to vent my speculations in this, or the like manner, for the universal benefit of mankind.'[1]

Wretched he who knows himself and mocks himself. What madman's laughter, and what a sob in this hoarse gaiety! What remains for him but to slaughter the remainder of human invention? Who does not see here the despair from which sprang the academy of Lagado? Is there not here a foretaste of madness in this intense meditation of absurdity? His mathematician, who, to teach geometry, makes his pupils swallow wafers on which he writes his theorems; his moralist, who, to reconcile political parties, proposes to saw off the occiput and brain of each 'opposite party-man,' and 'to let the occiputs thus cut off be interchanged;' his economist again, who tries 'to reduce human excrement to its original food.' Swift is akin to these, and is the most wretched of all, because he nourishes his mind, like them, on filth and folly, and he has more knowledge and disgust than they.

It is sad to exhibit human folly, it is sadder to exhibit human perversity: the heart is more a part of ourselves than reason: we suffer less in seeing extravagance and folly than wickedness and baseness, and I find Swift more agreeable in his *Tale of a Tub* than in *Gulliver*.

All his talent and all his passions are assembled in this book; the positive mind has impressed upon it its form and force. There is

[1] *A Tale of a Tub; A Digression concerning Madness*, sec. 11, 167

nothing agreeable in the fiction or the style; it is the journal of an ordinary man, a surgeon, then a captain, who describes coolly and sensibly the events and objects which he has seen; no feeling for the beautiful, no appearance of admiration or passion, no accent. Banks and Cook relate thus. Swift only seeks the natural, and he attains it. His art consists in taking an absurd supposition, and deducing seriously the effects to which it leads. It is the logical and technical mind of a mechanician, who, imagining the decrease or increase in a wheelwork, perceives the result of the changes, and writes down the record. His whole pleasure is in seeing these results clearly, and by a solid reasoning. He marks the dimensions, and so forth, like a good engineer and a statistician, omitting no trivial and positive detail, explaining cookery, stabling, politics: in this he has no equal but De Foe. The loadstone machine which sustains the flying island, the entrance of Gulliver in Lilliput, and the inventory of his property, his arrival and maintenance among the Yahoos, carry us with them; no mind knew better the ordinary laws of nature and human life; no mind shut itself up more strictly in this knowledge; none was ever more exact or more limited.

But what a vehemence in this dryness! How ridiculous our interests and passions seem, degraded to the littleness of Lilliput, or compared to the vastness of Brobdignag! What is beauty, when the handsomest body, seen with piercing eyes, seems horrible? What is our power, when an insect, king of an ant-hill, can be called, like our princes, 'sublime majesty, delight and terror of the universe?' What is our homage worth, when a pigmy 'is taller, by almost the breadth of a nail, than any of his court, which alone is enough to strike an awe into his beholders?' Three-fourths of our sentiment are follies, and the weakness of our organs is the only cause of our veneration or love.

Society repels us still more than man. At Laputa, at Lilliput, amongst the horses and giants, Swift rages against it, and is never tired of abusing and reviling it. In his eyes, 'ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator; laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them.'[1] A noble is a wretch, corrupted body and soul, 'combining in himself all the diseases and vices transmitted by ten generations of rakes and rascals. A lawyer is a hired liar, wont by twenty years of roguery to pervert the truth if he is an advocate, and to sell it if he is a judge. A minister of state is a go-between, who, having disposed of his wife,' or brawled for the public good, is master of all offices; and who, in order better to rob the money of the nation, buys members of the House of Commons with the same money. A prince is a practiser of all the vices, unable to employ or love an honest man, persuaded that 'the royal throne

[1] Swift's Works, xii. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 2, ch. 6, p. 171.

could not be supported without corruption, because that positive, confident, restive temper, which virtue infused into a man, was a perpetual clog to public business.'[1] At Lilliput the king chooses as his ministers those who dance best upon the tight-rope. At Luggnagg he compels all those, who are presented to him, to crawl on their bellies and lick the dust.

'When the king has a mind to put any of his nobles to death in a gentle, indulgent manner, he commands the floor to be strewed with a certain brown powder of a deadly composition, which, being licked up, infallibly kills him in twenty-four hours. But in justice to this prince's great clemency, and the care he has of his subjects' lives (wherein it were much to be wished that the monarchs of Europe would imitate him), it must be mentioned for his honour, that strict orders are given to have the infected parts of the floor well washed after every such execution. . . . I myself heard him give directions that one of his pages should be whipped, whose turn it was to give notice about washing the floor after an execution, but maliciously had omitted it; by which neglect, a young lord of great hopes coming to an audience, was unfortunately poisoned, although the prince at that time had no design against his life. But this good prince was so gracious as to forgive the poor page his whipping, upon promise that he would do so no more, without special orders.'[2]

All these fictions of giants, pigmies, flying islands, are means for depriving human nature of the veils with which habit and imagination cover it, to display it in its truth and its ugliness. There is still one cloak to remove, the most deceitful and familiar. Swift must take away that appearance of reason in which we deck ourselves. He must suppress the sciences, arts, combinations of societies, inventions of industries, whose brightness dazzles us. He must discover the Yahoo in man. What a spectacle!

'At last I beheld several animals in a field, and one or two of the same kind sitting in trees. Their shape was very singular and deformed. . . . Their heads and breasts were covered with a thick hair, some frizzled, and others lank; they had beards like goats, and a long ridge of hair down their backs, and the forepart of their legs and feet; but the rest of their bodies was bare, so that I might see their skins, which were of a brown buff colour. . . . They climbed high trees as nimbly as a squirrel, for they had strong extended claws before and behind, terminating in sharp points and hooked. . . . The females . . . had long lank hair on their head, but none on their faces, nor anything more than a sort of down on the rest of their bodies. . . . Upon the whole I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so great an antipathy.'[3]

According to Swift, such are our brothers. He finds in them all our instincts. They hate each other, tear each other with their talons, with hideous contortions and yells: such is the source of our quarrels. If they find a dead cow, although they are but five, and there is enough for fifty, they strangle and wound each other: such is a picture of our

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 3, ch. 8, p. 258.
[2] *Ibid.* Part 3, ch. 9, p. 264.
[3] *Ibid.* Part 4 ch. 1, p. 286.

greed and our wars. They dig up precious stones and hide them in their kennels, and watch them 'with great caution,' pining and howling when robbed: such is the origin of our love of gold. They devour indifferently 'herbs, berries, roots, the corrupted flesh of animals,' preferring 'what they could get by rapine or stealth,' gorging themselves till they vomit or burst: such is the portrait of our gluttony and injustice. They have a kind of juicy and unwholesome root, which they 'would suck with great delight,' till they 'howl, and grin, and chatter,' embracing or scratching each other, then reeling, hiccuping, wallowing in the mud: such is a picture of our drunkenness.

'In most herds there was a sort of ruling yahoo, who was always more deformed in body, and mischievous in disposition, than any of the rest: that this leader had usually a favourite as like himself as he could get, whose employment was to lick his master's feet, . . . and drive the female yahoos to his kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of ass's flesh. . . . He usually continues in office till a worse can be found.'[1]

Such is an abstract of our government. And yet he gives preference to the Yahoos over men, saying that our wretched reason has aggravated and multiplied these vices, and concluding with the king of Brobdignag that our species is 'the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'[2]

Five years after this treatise on man, he wrote in favour of unhappy Ireland a pamphlet which is like the last effort of his despair and his genius.[3] I give it almost whole; it deserves it. I know nothing like it in any literature:

'It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. . . . I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children . . . is, in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, easy members of the Commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation. . . . I shall now, therefore, humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.'[4]

When we know Swift, such a beginning frightens us:

'I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 4, ch. 7, p. 337. [2] *Ibid.* Part 2, ch. 6, p 172.

[3] *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of the poor people in Ireland from becoming a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the Public.*

[4] *Ibid.* vii. 454.

'I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; . . . that the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.'

'I have reckoned, upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh twelve pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, will increase to twenty-eight pounds.

'I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers), to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat.

'Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require), may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

'As to our city of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose in the most convenient parts of it; and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, than dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs. . . .

'I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made, are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance. For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies. . . . Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of a hundred thousand children, from two years old and upward, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, beside the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture. . . . Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit or expense. . . . Many other advantages might be enumerated, for instance, the addition of some thousand carcases in our exportation of barrelled beef; the propagation of swine's flesh, and the improvement in the art of making good bacon. . . . But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

'Some persons of desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts, what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter; because it is very well known, that they are every day dying and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition; they cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree, that

if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it; and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

'I profess, in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.'[1]

Much has been said of unhappy great men, Pascal, for instance. I think that his cries and his anguish are faint compared to this calm treatise.

Such was this great and unhappy genius, the greatest of the classical age, the most unhappy in history, English throughout, whom the excess of his English qualities inspired and consumed, having this intensity of desires, which is the main feature of the race, the enormity of pride which the habit of liberty, command, and success has impressed upon the nation, the solidity of the positive mind which the pursuit of business has established in the country; precluded from power and action by his unchecked passions and his intractable pride; excluded from poetry and philosophy by the clear-sightedness and narrowness of his common sense; deprived of the consolations offered by contemplative life, and the occupation furnished by practical life; too superior to embrace heartily a religious sect or a political party, too narrow-minded to rest in the lofty doctrines which conciliate all beliefs, or in the wide sympathies which envelop all parties; condemned by his nature and surroundings to fight without loving a cause, to write without being attached to the art, to think without attaining a dogma, a condottiere against parties, a misanthrope against man, a sceptic against beauty and truth. But these very surroundings, and this very nature, which expelled him from happiness, love, power, and science, raised him, in this age of French imitation and classical moderation, to a wonderful height, where, by the originality and power of his inventions, he is the equal of Byron, Milton, and Shakspeare, and shows pre-eminently the spirit of his nation. Sensibility, a positive mind, and pride, forged for him a unique style, of terrible vehemence, withering calmness, practical effectiveness, tempered with scorn, truth, and hatred, a weapon of vengeance and war which made his enemies cry out and die under its point and its poison. A pamphleteer against opposition and government, he tore or crushed his adversaries with his irony or his sentences, with the tone of a judge, a sovereign, and a hangman. A man of the world and a poet, he invented a cruel pleasantry, funereal laughter, a convulsive gaiety of bitter contrasts; and whilst dragging the mythological harness, as if it were a compulsory rag, he created a personal poetry by painting the crude details of trivial life, by the energy of a painful grotesqueness, by

[1] *A Modest Proposal* etc. 457.

the merciless revelation of the filth we conceal. A philosopher against all philosophy, he created a realistic poem, a grave parody, deduced like geometry, absurd as a dream, credible as a law report, attractive as a tale, degrading as a dishclout set like a crown on the head of a divinity. These were his miseries and his force : we quit such a spectacle with a sad heart, but full of admiration ; and we say that a palace is beautiful even when it is on fire. Artists will add: especially when it is on fire.

CHAPTER VI.

The Novelists.

I. Characteristic of the English novel—How it differs from others.

II. De Foe—His life—Energy, devotion, his part in politics—Spirit—Difference of old and modern realists — Works — Career — Aim — *Robinson Crusoe*—How this character is English — Inner enthusiasm—Obstinate will—Patience in work—Methodical common sense—Religious emotions—Final piety.

III. Circumstances which gave rise to the novels of the eighteenth century—All these novels are moral fictions and studies of character—Connexion of the essay and the novel—Two principal notions in morality—How they produce two kinds of novels.

IV. Richardson—Condition and character—Connexion of his perspicacity and his rigour — Talent, minuteness, combinations — *Pamela* — Her mood —Principles—The English wife—*Clarissa Harlowe*—The Harlowe family —Despotic and unsociable characteristics in England—Clarissa—Her energy, coolness, logic—Her pedantry and scruples—*Sir Charles Grandison*—Incongruities of automatic and edifying heroes—Richardson as a preacher—Prolixity, prudery, emphasis.

V. Fielding—Mood, character, and life—*Joseph Andrews*—His conception of nature—*Tom Jones*—Character of the squire—Fielding's heroes—*Amelia*—Faults in her conception.

VI. Smollett—*Roderick Random*—*Peregrine Pickle*—Comparison of Smollett and Lesage—Conception of life—Harshness of his heroes—Coarseness of his pictures—Standing out of his characters—*Humphrey Clinker*.

VII. Sterne—Excessive study of human particularities — Sterne's character—Eccentricity—Sensibility—Obscenity—Why he depicts the diseases and degeneracies of humanity.

VIII. Goldsmith—Purification of the novel—Picture of citizen life, upright happiness, Protestant virtue—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—The English clergyman.

IX. Samuel Johnson—His authority—Person—Manners—Life—Doctrines—Opinion of Voltaire and Rousseau—Style—Works—Hogarth—Moral and realistic painting—Contrast of English temperament and morality—How morality has disciplined temperament.

I.

AMIDST these finished and perfect writings a new kind makes its appearance, appropriate to the public tendencies and circumstances, the anti-romantic novel, the work and the reading of positive minds, observers and moralists, destined not to exalt and amuse the

imagination, like the novels of Spain and the middle ages, not to reproduce or embellish conversation, like the novels of France and the seventeenth century, but to depict real life, to describe characters, to suggest plans of conduct, and judge motives of action. It was a strange apparition, and like the voice of a people buried underground, when, amidst the splendid corruption of high life, this severe emanation of the middle class welled up, and when the obscenities of Mrs. Aphra Behn, still the diversion of ladies of fashion, were found on the same table with De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

II.

De Foe, a dissenter, a pamphleteer, a journalist, a novel-writer, successively a hosier, a tile-maker, an accountant, was one of those indefatigable labourers and obstinate combatants, who, ill-treated, calumniated, imprisoned, succeeded by their uprightness, common sense, and energy, in gaining England over to their side. At twenty-three, having taken arms for Monmouth, he was fortunate in not being hung or transported. Seven years later he was ruined, and obliged to hide. In 1702, for a pamphlet misunderstood, he was condemned to pay a fine, was set in the pillory, had his ears cut off, was imprisoned two years in Newgate, and only the charity of Godolphin prevented his wife and six children from dying of hunger. Being released and sent as a commissioner to Scotland, to treat about the union of the two countries, he had a narrow escape of being stoned. Another pamphlet, again misconceived, sent him to prison, compelled him to pay a fine of eight hundred pounds, and only just in time he received the queen's pardon. He was caricatured, robbed, and slandered. He was obliged to protest against the plagiarists who borrowed and altered his works for their benefit; against the neglect of the Whigs, who did not find him tractable enough; against the animosity of the Tories, who saw in him the chief champion of the Whigs. In the midst of his self-defence he was struck with apoplexy, and continued to defend himself from his bed. Yet he lived, but with great difficulty; poor and burdened with a family, he turned, at fifty-five, to fiction, and wrote successively *Moll Flanders*, *Captain Singleton*, *Duncan Campbell*, *Colonel Jack*, the *History of the Great Plague in London*, etc. This vein exhausted, he diverged and tried another—the *Complete English Tradesman*, *a Tour through Great Britain*. Death comes on; poverty remains. In vain had he written in prose, in verse, on all subjects, political and religious, accidental or moral, satires and novels, histories and poems, travels and pamphlets, commercial essays and statistical information, in all two hundred and ten works, not of verbiage, but of arguments, documents, and facts, crowded and piled one upon another with such prodigality, that the memory, thought, and application of one man seem too small for such a labour; he died penniless, in debt. However we regard his life, we see only prolonged efforts and persecutions. Joy seems to be

wanting; the idea of the beautiful never enters. When he comes to fiction, it is like a Presbyterian and a plebeian, with low subjects and moral aims, to treat of the adventures and reform the conduct of thieves and prostitutes, workmen and sailors. His whole delight was to think that he had a service to perform, and that he was performing it:

'He that opposes his own judgment against the current of the times ought to be backed with unanswerable truth; and he that has truth on his side, is a fool as well as a coward, if he is afraid to own it, because of the multitude of other men's opinions. 'Tis hard for a man to say, all the world is mistaken, but himself. But if it be so, who can help it?'

De Foe is like one of those brave, obscure, and useful soldiers who, with empty belly and burdened shoulders, go through their duties with their feet in the mud, pocket blows, receive day by day the fire of the enemy, and sometimes that of their friends into the bargain, and die sergeants, happy if it has been their lot to get hold of the legion of honour.

He had the kind of mind suitable to such a hard service, solid, exact, entirely destitute of refinement, enthusiasm, pleasantness.[1] His imagination was that of a man of business, not of an artist, crammed and, as it were, jammed down with facts. He tells them as they come to him, without arrangement or style, like a conversation, without dreaming of producing an effect or composing a phrase, employing technical terms and vulgar forms, repeating himself at need, using the same thing two or three times, not seeming to suspect that there are methods of amusing, touching, engrossing, or pleasing, with no desire but to pour out on paper the fulness of the information with which he is charged. Even in fiction his information is as precise as in history. He gives dates, year, month, and day; notes the wind, north-east, south-west, north-west; he writes a log-book, an invoice, attorneys' and shopkeepers' bills, the number of moidores, interest, specie payments, payments in kind, cost and sale prices, the share of the king, of religious houses, partners, brokers, net totals, statistics, the geography and hydrography of the island, so that the reade. is tempted to take an atlas and draw for himself a little map of the place, to enter into all the details of the history as clearly and fully as the author. It seems as though he had performed all Crusoe's labours, so exactly does he describe them, with numbers, quantities, dimensions, like a carpenter, potter, or an old tar. Never was such a sense of the real before or since. Our realists of to-day, painters, anatomists, decidedly men of business, are very far from this naturalness; art and calculation crop out amidst their too minute descriptions. De Foe creates illusion; for it is not the eye which deceives us, but the

[1] See his dull poems, amongst others *Jure Divino*, a poem in twelve books in defence of every man's birthright by nature.

mind, and that literally: his account of the great plague has more than once passed for true; and Lord Chatham took his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* for authentic. This was his aim. In the preface to the old edition of *Robinson Crusoe* it is said:

'The story is told . . . to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence. The editor believes the thing to be a just history of facts; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it.'

All his talents lie in this, and thus even his imperfections aid him; his lack of art becomes a profound art; his negligence, repetitions, prolixity, contribute to the illusion: we cannot imagine that such and such a detail, so minute, so dull, is invented; an inventor would have suppressed it; it is too tedious to have been put in on purpose: art chooses, embellishes, interests; art, therefore, cannot have piled up this heap of dull and vulgar accidents; it is the truth.

Read, for instance, *A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal, the next Day after her Death, to one Mrs Bargrave, at Canterbury, the 8th of September* 1705; *which Apparition recommends the perusal of Drelincourt's Book of Consolation against the Fear of Death.*[1] The ancient threepenny little books, read by old needlewomen, are not more monotonous. There is such an array of circumstantial and guaranteed details, such a file of witnesses quoted, referred to, registered, compared, such a perfect appearance of tradesman-like honesty, coarse, vulgar common sense, that one would take the author for an honest retired hosier, with too little brains to invent a story; no writer careful of his reputation would have composed such nonsense. In fact, it was not his reputation that De Foe cared for; he had other motives in his head; we literary men of the present time cannot guess them, being literary men only. In short, he wanted to sell a pious book of Drelincourt, which would not sell of itself, and in addition, to confirm people in their belief by advocating the appearance of ghosts. It was the grand proof then brought to bear on sceptics. Grave Dr. Johnson himself tried to see a ghost, and no event of that time was more appropriate to the belief of the middle class. Here, as elsewhere, De Foe, like Swift, is a man of action; effect, not noise touches him; he composed *Robinson Crusoe* to warn the impious, as Swift wrote the life of the last man hung to inspire thieves with terror. In this positive and religious age, amidst these political and puritan citizens, practice is of such importance as to reduce art to the condition of its tool.

Never was art the tool of a more moral or more English work. Crusoe is quite one of his race, and might instruct it in the present day. He has that force of will, inner enthusiasm, dull ferment of a violent examination which formerly produced the sea-kings, and now produces emigrants and squatters. The misfortunes of his two brothers, the

[1] Compare Edgar Poe's *Case of M. Waldemar*. The American is a suffering artist; De Foe a sensible citizen.

tears of his relatives, the advice of his friends, the remonstrances of his reason, the remorse of his conscience, are all unable to restrain him; there was 'a something fatal in his nature;' he had conceived the idea, he must go to sea. To no purpose is he seized with repentance during the first storm; he drowns in punch these 'fits' of conscience. To no purpose is he warned by shipwreck and a narrow escape from death; he is hardened, and grows obstinate. To no purpose captivity among the Moors and the possession of a fruitful plantation invite repose; the indomitable instinct returns; he was born to be his own destroyer, and embarks again. The ship goes down; he is cast alone on a desert island; then his native energy found its vent and its employment; like his descendants, the pioneers of Australia and America, he must re-create and re-master one by one the inventions and acquisitions of human industry; one by one he does so. Nothing represses his effort; neither possession nor weariness:

'I had the biggest magazine of all kinds now that ever was laid up, I believe, for one man; but I was not satisfied still; for, while the ship sat upright in that posture, I thought I ought to get everything out of her that I could. . . . I got most of the pieces of cable ashore, and some of the iron, though with infinite labour; for I was fain to dip for it into the water; a work which fatigued me very much. . . . I believe, verily, had the calm weather held, I should have brought away the whole ship, piece by piece.'[1]

In his eyes, work is natural. When, in order 'to barricade himself, he goes to cut the piles in the woods, and drives them into the earth, which cost a great deal of time and labour,' he says:

'A very laborious and tedious work. But what need I have been concerned at the tediousness of any thing I had to do, seeing I had time enough to do it in? . . . My time or labour was little worth, and so it was as well employed one way as another.'[2]

Application and fatigue of head and arms give occupation to his superfluous activity and force; the mill must find grist to grind, without which, turning round empty, it would consume itself. He works, therefore, all day and night, at once carpenter, oarsman, porter, hunter, tiller of the ground, potter, tailor, milkman, basketmaker, grinder, baker, invincible in difficulties, disappointments, expenditure of time and toil. Having but a hatchet and an adze, it took him forty-two days to make a board. He occupied two months in making his first two jars; five months in making his first boat; then, 'by dint of hard labour,' he levelled the ground from his timber-yard to the sea, tried to bring the sea up to his boat, and began to dig a canal; then, reckoning that he would require ten or twelve years to finish the task, he builds another boat at another place, with another canal half a mile long, four feet deep, six wide. He spends two years over it:

[1] De Foe's Works, 20 vols. 1819-21. *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, i. ch. iv. 65.

[2] *Ibid.* 76.

'I bore with this. . . . I went through that by dint of hard labour. . . . Many weary stroke it had cost. . . . This will testify that I was not idle. . . . As I had learned not to despair of any thing. I never grudged my labour.'

These strong expressions of indomitable patience are ever recurring. This hard race is framed for labour, as its sheep are for slaughter and its horses for the chase. Even now you may hear their mighty hatchet and pickaxe strokes in the claims of Melbourne and in the log-houses of the Salt Lake. The reason of their success is the same there as here; they do everything with calculation and method; they rationalise their energy, which is like a torrent they make a canal for. Crusoe sets to work only after deliberate calculation and reflection. When he seeks a spot for his tent, he enumerates the four conditions of the place he requires. When he wishes to escape despair, he draws up impartially, 'like debtor and creditor,' the list of his advantages and disadvantages, putting them in two columns, active and passive, item for item, so that the balance is in his favour. His courage is only the servant of his common sense:

'By stating and squaring everything by reason, and by making the most rational judgment of things, every man may be in time master of every mechanic art. I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time, by labour, application, and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools.'[1]

There is a grave and deep pleasure in this painful success, and in this personal acquisition. The squatter, like Crusoe, takes pleasure in things, not only because they are useful, but because they are his work. He feels himself a man, whilst finding all about him the sign of his labour and thought; he is pleased:

'I had everything so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great.'[2]

He returns to his home willingly, because he is there a master and creator of all the comforts he has around him; he takes his meals there gravely and 'like a king.'

Such are the pleasures of home. A guest enters there to fortify these natural inclinations by the ascendency of duty. Religion appears, as it must, in emotions and visions: for this is not a calm soul; imagination breaks out into it at the least shock, and carries it to the threshold of madness. On the day when he saw the 'print of a naked man's foot on the shore,' he stood 'like one thunderstruck,' and fled 'like a hare to cover;' his ideas are in a whirl, he is no longer master of them; though he is hidden and barricaded, he thinks himself discovered; he intends 'to throw down the enclosures, turn all the tame cattle wild into the woods, dig up the corn-fields.' He has all kind of fancies; he asks himself if it is not the devil who has left this footmark; and reasons upon it:

[1] *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. iv. 79. [2] *Ibid.* 80.

'I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to have terrified me; . . . that, as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea upon a high wind would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil.'[1]

In this impassioned and uncultivated mind, which for eight years had continued without a thought, and as it were stupid, engrossed in manual labour and bodily wants, belief took root, fostered by anxiety and solitude. Amidst the risks of all-powerful nature, in this great uncertain upheaving, a Frenchman, a man bred like us, would cross his arms gloomily like a Stoic, or would wait like an epicure for the return of physical cheerfulness. As for Crusoe, at the sight of the ears of barley which have suddenly made their appearance, he weeps, and thinks at first 'that God had miraculously caused this grain to grow.' Another day he has a terrible vision: in a fever he repents of his sins; he opens the Bible, and finds these words, which 'were very apt to his case:' 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'[2] Prayer then rises to his lips, true prayer, the converse of the heart with a God who answers, and to whom we listen. He also read the words: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'[3]

'Immediately it occurred that these words were to me. Why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsaken of God and man?'[4]

Thenceforth spiritual life begins for him. To reach its very foundation, the squatter needs only his Bible; with it he carries out his faith, his theology, his worship; every evening he finds in it some application to his present condition: he is not alone; God speaks to him, and provides for his energy matter for a second labour to sustain and complete the first. For he now undertakes against his heart the combat which he has maintained against nature; he wants to conquer, transform, ameliorate, pacify the one as he has done with the other. Crusoe fasts, observes the Sabbath, three times a day he reads the Scripture, and says:

'I gave humble and hearty thanks . . . that he (God) could fully make up to me the deficiencies of my solitary state, and the want of human society by his presence, and the communication of his grace to my soul, supporting, comforting, and encouraging me to depend upon his providence, and hope for his eternal presence hereafter.'[5]

In this disposition of mind there is nothing a man cannot endure or do; heart and hand come to the assistance of the arms; religion consecrates labour, piety feeds patience; and man, supported on one side by his instincts, on the other by his beliefs, finds himself able to clear the land, to people, to organise and civilise continents.

[1] *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. xi. 184. [2] *Ibid.* 187. Ps. l. 15. [3] Heb. xiii. 5.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. viii. 134. [5] *Ibid* ch. viii. 133.

III.

It was by chance that De Foe, like Cervantes, lighted on a novel of character: as a rule, like Cervantes, he only wrote novels of adventure; he knew life better than the soul, and the general course of the world better than the particularities of the individual. But the impulse was given, nevertheless, and now the rest followed. Chivalrous manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the poetical and picturesque drama. Monarchical manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the witty and licentious drama. Citizen manners had been established, bringing with them domestic and practical reading. Like society, literature changed its course. Books were needed to read by the fireside, in the country, in the family: invention and genius turn to this kind of writing. The sap of human thought, abandoning the old dried-up branches, flowed into the unseen boughs, which it suddenly made to grow and turn green, and the fruits which it produced bear witness at once to the surrounding temperature and the native stock. Two features are common and proper to them. All these novels are character novels. The men of this country, more reflective than others, more inclined to the melancholy pleasure of concentrated attention and inner examination, find around them human medals more vigorously struck, less worn by friction with the world, whose uninjured face is more visible than that of others. All these novels are works of observation, and spring from a moral design. The men of this time, having fallen away from lofty imagination, and being immersed in active life, desire to cull from books a solid instruction, exact documents, effectual emotions, feelings of practical admiration, and motives of action.

We have but to look around; the same inclination begins on all sides the same task. The novel springs up everywhere, and shows the same spirit under all forms. At this time[1] appear the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, *Guardian*, and all those agreeable and serious essays which, like the novel, look for readers at home, to supply them with documents and provide them with counsels; which, like the novel, describe manners, paint characters, and try to correct the public; which, in fine, like the novel, turn spontaneously to fiction and portraiture. Addison, like a delicate amateur of moral curiosities, complacently follows the amiable oddities of Sir Roger de Coverley, smiles, and with discreet hand guides the excellent knight through all the awkward predicaments which may bring out his rural prejudices and his innate generosity; whilst by his side the unhappy Swift, degrading man to the instincts of the beast of prey and beast of burden, tortures humanity by forcing it to recognise itself under the execrable portrait of the Yahoo. Although they differ, both authors are working at the same task. They only employ imagination in order to study characters, and to suggest plans of conduct. They bring

[1] 1709, 1711, 1713.

down philosophy to observation and application. They only dream of reforming or chastising vice. They are only moralists and psychologists. They both confine themselves to the consideration of vice and virtue; one with calm benevolence, the other with savage indignation. The same point of view produces the graceful portraits of Addison and the frightful pictures of Swift. Their successors do the like, and all diversities of mood and talent do not hinder their works from acknowledging a single source, and concurring in a single effect.

Two principal ideas can rule, and have ruled, morality in England. Now it is conscience which is accepted as a sovereign; now it is instinct which is taken for guide. Now they have recourse to grace; now they rely on nature. Now they wholly enslave everything to rule; now they give everything up to liberty. The two opinions have successively reigned in England; and the human frame, at once too vigorous and too unyielding, successively justifies their ruin and their success. Some, alarmed by the fire of an over-fed temperament, and by the energy of unsocial passions, have regarded nature as a dangerous beast, and placed conscience with all its auxiliaries, religion, law, education, proprieties, as so many armed sentinels to repress its least outbreaks. Others, repelled by the harshness of an incessant constraint, and by the minuteness of a morose discipline, have overturned guards and barriers, and let loose captive nature to enjoy the free air and sun, deprived of which it was being choked. Both by their excesses have deserved their defeats and raised up their adversaries. From Shakspeare to the Puritans, from Milton to Wycherley, from Congreve to De Foe, from Wilberforce to Lord Byron, unruliness has provoked constraint and tyranny revolt. This great contest of rule and nature is developed again in the writings of Fielding and Richardson.

IV.

'*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, in a series of familiar letters from a beautiful young damsel to her parents, published in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes; a narrative which has its foundation in truth, and at the same time that it agreeably entertains by a variety of curious and affecting incidents, is entirely divested of all those images which, in too many pieces calculated for amusement only, tend to inflame the minds they should instruct.'[1] We can make no mistake, the title is clear. The preachers rejoiced to see assistance coming to them from the very spot where there was danger; and Dr. Sherlock, from his pulpit, recommended the book. Men inquired about the author. He was a printer and bookseller, a joiner's son, who, at the age of fifty, and in his leisure moments, wrote in his shop parlour: a laborious man, who, by work and good conduct, had raised himself to a competency and sound informa-

[1] 1741. The translator has consulted the tenth edition, 1775, 4 vols

tion; delicate, moreover gentle, nervous, often ill, with a taste for the society of women, accustomed to correspond for and with them, of reserved and retired habits, whose only fault was a timid vanity. He was severe in principles, and had acquired perspicacity by his rigour. In fact, conscience is a lamp; a moralist is a psychologist; Christian casuistry is a sort of natural history of the soul. He who through anxiety of conscience busies himself in drawing out the good or evil motives of his manifest actions, who sees vices and virtues at their birth, who follows the insensible progress of culpable thoughts, and the secret confirmation of good resolves, who can mark the force, nature, and moment of temptations and resistances, holds in his hand almost all the moving strings of humanity, and has only to make them vibrate regularly to draw from them the most powerful harmonies. In this consists the art of Richardson; he combines whilst he observes; his meditation develops the ideas of the moralist. No one in this age has equalled him in these detailed and comprehensive conceptions, which, grouping to a single end the passions of thirty characters, twine and colour the innumerable threads of the whole canvas, to bring out a figure, an action, or a lesson.

This first novel is a flower—one of those flowers which only bloom in a virgin imagination, at the dawn of original invention, whose charm and freshness surpass all that the maturity of art and genius can afterwards cultivate or arrange. Pamela is a child of fifteen, brought up by an old lady, half servant and half favourite, who, after the death of her mistress, finds herself exposed to the growing seductions and persecutions of the young master of the house. She is a genuine child, frank and artless as Goethe's Margaret, and of the same family. After twenty pages, we involuntarily see this fresh rosy face, always blushing, and her laughing eyes, so ready with tears. At the smallest kindness she is confused; she knows not what to say; she changes colour, casts down her eyes, as she makes a curtsey; the poor innocent heart is troubled or melts.[1] No trace of the bold vivacity, the nervous coolness, which are the elements of a French girl. She is 'a lambkin,' loved, loving, without pride, vanity, bitterness; timid, always humble. When her master tries forcibly to kiss her, she is astonished; she will not believe that the world is so wicked. 'This gentleman has degraded himself to offer freedoms to his poor servant.'[2] She is afraid of being too free with him; reproaches herself, when she writes to her relatives, with saying too often *he* and *him* instead of his honour; 'but it is his fault if I do, for why did he lose all his dignity with me?'[3] No outrage exhausts

[1] 'To be sure I did think nothing but curt'sy and cry, and was all in confusion at his goodness.

'I was so confounded at these words, you might have beat me down with a feather. . . . So, like a fool, I was ready to cry, and went away curt'sying, and blushing, I am sure up to the ears.'

[2] Vol. i. Letter x. [3] *Ibid.*

her submissiveness: he has embraced her, and took hold of her arm so rudely that it was 'black and blue;' he has done worse, he has behaved like a ruffian and a knave. To cap all, he slanders her circumstantially before the servants; he insults her repeatedly, and provokes her to speak; she does not speak, will not fail in her duty to her master. 'It is for you, sir, to say what you please, and for me only to say, God bless your honour!'[1] She falls on her knees, and thanks him for sending her away. But in so much submission what resistance! All is against her; he is her master; he is a justice of the peace, secure against all intervention—a sort of divinity to her, with all the superiority and authority of a feudal prince. Moreover, he has the brutality of the times; he rates her, speaks to her like a slave, and yet thinks himself very kind. He shuts her up alone for several months, with 'a wicked creature,' his housekeeper, who beats and threatens her. He attacks her by fear, weariness, surprise, money, gentleness. At last, what is more terrible, her own heart is against her: she loves him secretly; her virtues injure her; she dare not lie, when she most needs it;[2] and piety keeps her from suicide, when that seems her only resource. One by one the issues close around her, so that she loses hope, and the readers of her adventures think her lost and ruined. But this native innocence has been strengthened by Puritanic faith. She sees temptations in her weaknesses; she knows that 'Lucifer always is ready to promote his own work and workmen;'[3] she is penetrated by the great Christian idea, which makes all souls equal before the common salvation and the final judgment. She says: 'My soul is of equal importance to the soul of a princess, though my quality is inferior to that of the meanest slave.'[4] Wounded, stricken, abandoned, betrayed, still the knowledge and thought of a happy or an unhappy eternity are two defences which no assault can carry. She knows it well; she has no other means of explaining vice than to suppose them absent. She considers that wicked Mrs. Jewkes is an atheist. Belief in God, the heart's belief—not the wording of the catechism, but the inner feeling, the habit of picturing justice as ever living and ever present—this is the fresh blood which the Reformation caused to enter the veins of the old world, and which alone could give it a new life and a new youth.

She is, as it were, animated by it; in the most perilous as in the sweetest moments, this grand sentiment returns to her, so much is it entwined with all the rest, so much has it multiplied its tendrils and buried its roots in the innermost folds of her heart. Her young master thinks of marrying her now, and wishes to be sure that she loves him. She dares not say so, being afraid to give him a hold upon her. She

[1] *Pamela*, i. Letter xxvii. *Pamela*, i. Letter xxv.

[2] 'I dare not tell a wilful lie.'

[3] '*Ibid.* Letter to Mr. Williams, i. 26.

is greatly troubled by his kindness, and yet she must answer. Religion comes to veil love in a sublime half-confession:

'I fear not, sir, the grace of God supporting me, that any acts of kindness would make me forget what I owe to my virtue; but . . . my nature is too frank and open to make me wish to be ungrateful; and if I should be taught a lesson I never yet learnt, with what regret should I descend to the grave, to think that I could not hate my undoer: and that, at the last great day, I must stand up as an accuser of the poor unhappy soul, that I could wish it in my power to save![1]

He is softened and vanquished, descends from that vast height where aristocratic customs had placed him, and thenceforth, day by day, the letters of the happy child record the preparations for their marriage. Amidst this triumph and happiness she continues humble, devoted, and tender; her heart is full, and gratitude fills it from every source. 'This foolish girl must be, after twelve o'clock this day, as much his wife as if he were to marry a duchess.'[2] She 'had the boldness to kiss his hand.'[3] 'My heart is so wholly yours, that I am afraid of nothing but that I may be forwarder than you wish.'[4] Shall the marriage take place Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday? She dare not say Yes; she blushes and trembles: there is a delightful charm in this timid modesty, these restrained effusions. For a wedding present she obtains the pardon of the wicked creatures who have ill-treated her: 'I clasped my arms about his neck, and was not ashamed to kiss him once, and twice, and three times, once for each forgiven person.'[5] Then they talk over their plans: she shall remain at the lodge; she will not frequent grand parties; she is not fond of cards; she will keep the 'family accounts,' and distribute her husband's charities; she will help the housekeeper in 'the making jellies, comfits, sweetmeats, marmalades, cordials, and to pot, and candy, and preserve,'[6] to get up the linen; she will look after the breakfast and dinner, especially when there are guests; she knows how to carve; she will wait for her husband, who perhaps will be so good as now and then to give her an hour or two of his 'agreeable conversation,' 'and will be indulgent to the impertinent overflowings of my grateful heart.'[7] In his absence she will read—'that will help to polish my mind, and make me worthier of your company and conversation;'[8] and she will pray to God, she says, in order 'that I may be enabled to discharge my duty to'[9] her husband. Richardson has sketched here the portrait of the English wife—a good housekeeper and sedentary, studious and obedient, loving and pious—and Fielding will finish it in his *Amelia*.

This was a contest: here is one still greater. Virtue, like force of every kind, is valued according to its power of resistance; and we have only to subject it to more violent tests, to give it its greatest

[1] *Pamela*, i. 290. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 167 [3] *Ibid.* ii. 78. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 148.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 194. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 62. [7] *Ibid.* [8] *Ibid.* ii. 63.
[9] *Ibid.*

prominence. Let us look in the passions of her native land for foes capable of assailing virtue, calling it forth, and rendering it obstinate. The evil and the good of the English character is a too strong will.[1] When tenderness and lofty reason fail, the native energy is turned to sternness, obstinacy, inflexible tyranny, and the heart becomes a den of malevolent passions, eager to rave and tear each other. Against a family, having such passions, Clarissa Harlowe has to struggle. Her father never would be 'controuled, nor yet persuaded.'[2] He never 'did give up one point he thought he had a right to carry.'[3] He has broken down the will of his wife, and degraded her to the part of a dumb servant; he wishes to break down the will of his daughter, and give her for a husband a coarse and heartless fool. He is the head of the family, master of all his people, despotic and ambitious as a Roman patrician, and he wishes to found a house. He is stern in these two harsh resolves, and thunders against the rebellious daughter. Above the outbursts of his voice we hear the loud wrath of his son, a sort of hot-blooded, over-fed bull-dog, excited by his greed, his youth, his fiery temper, and his premature authority; the shrill outcry of the eldest daughter, a coarse, plain-looking girl, with 'a plump, high-fed face,' exactingly jealous, prone to hate, who, being neglected by Lovelace, revenges herself on her beautiful sister; the churlish growling of the two uncles, narrow-minded old bachelors, vulgar, pig-headed, through their notions of male authority; the grievous importunities of the mother, the aunt, the old nurse, poor timid slaves, reduced one by one to become instruments of persecution. The whole family have bound themselves to favour Mr. Solmes' proposal to marry Clarissa. They do not reason, they simply express their will. By dint of repetition, only one idea has fixed itself in their brain, and they become furious when any one endeavours to free them from it. 'Who at the long run must submit?' asks her mother; 'all of us to you, or you to all of us?'[4] Clarissa offers every submission; she consents to give up her property. But her family answered: 'They had a right to her obedience upon their own terms; her proposal was an artifice, only to gain time; nothing but marrying Mr. Solmes should do; . . . they should not be at rest till it was done.'[5] It must be done, they have promised it; it is a point of honour with them. A girl, a young, inexperienced, insignificant girl, to resist men, old men, of position and consideration, nay, her whole family—monstrous! So they persist, like brutes as they are, blindly putting on the screw with all their stupid hands together, not seeing that at every turn they bring the child nearer to madness, dishonour, or death. She begs them, implores them, one by one, with

[1] See in *Pamela* the characters of Squire B. and Lady Davers

[2] *Clarissa Harlowe*, 4th ed. 1751, 7 vols i. 92. [3] *Ibid.* i. 105.

[4] *Ibid.* i. Letter xx. 125. [5] *Ibid.* i. Letter xxxix. 253.

every argument and prayer; racks herself to discover concessions, goes on her knees, faints, makes them weep. It is all useless. The indomitable, crushing will oppresses her with its daily increasing mass. There is no example of such a varied moral torture, so incessant, so obstinate. They persist in it, as if it were a task, and are vexed to find that she makes her task so long. They refuse to see her, forbid her to write, are afraid of her tears. Her sister Arabella, with the venomous bitterness of an offended, ugly woman, tries to make her insults more stinging:

'The *witty*, the *prudent*, nay the *dutiful* and pi-ous (so she sneeringly pronounced the word) Clarisse Harlowe, should be so strangely fond of a profligate man, that her parents were forced to lock her up, in order to hinder her from running into his arms. "Let me ask you, my dear, said she, how you now keep your account of the disposition of your time? How many hours in the twenty-four do you devote to your needle? How many to your prayers? How many to letter-writing? And how many to love? I doubt, I doubt, my little dear, the latter article is like Aaron's rod, and swallows up the rest. . . . You must therefore bend or break, that was all, child.[1] . . .

'"What, not speak yet? Come, my sullen, silent dear, speak one word to me. You must say *two* very soon to Mr. Solmes, I can tell you that. . . . Well, well (insultingly wiping my averted face with her handkerchief) . . . Then you think you may be brought to speak the two words."'[2]

She continues thus:

'*This*, Clary, is a pretty pattern enough. But *this* is quite charming!—And *this*, were I you, should be my wedding nightgown.—But, Clary, won't you have a velvet suit? It would cut a great figure in a country church, you know. Crimson velvet, I suppose. Such a fine complexion as yours, how would it be set off by it!—And do you sigh, love? Black velvet, so fair as you are, with those charming eyes, gleaming, through a wintry cloud, like an April sun. Does not Lovelace tell you they are charming eyes?'[3]

Then, when Arabella is reminded that, three months ago, she did not find Lovelace so worthy of scorn, she nearly chokes with passion; she wants to beat her sister, cannot speak, and says to her aunt, 'with great violence:' 'Let us go, madam; let us leave the creature to swell till she bursts with her own poison.'[4] It reminds us of a pack of hounds in full cry after a deer, which is caught, and wounded; whilst the pack grow more eager and more ferocious, because they have tasted his blood.

At the last moment, when she thinks to escape them, a new chase begins, more dangerous than the other. Lovelace has all the evil passions of Harlowe, and in addition a genius which sharpens and aggravates them. What a character! How English! how different from the Don Juan of Mozart or of Molière! Before everything the cruel fair one, the desire to bend others, a combative spirit, a craving

[1] *Clarissa Harlowe*, i. Letter xlii. 278.
[2] *Ibid.* i. Letter xliii. 295.
[3] *Ibid.* i. Letter xlv. 308.
[4] *Ibid.* 309.

for triumph; only after these come the senses. He spares an innocent girl because he knows she is easy to conquer, and the grandmother 'has besought him to be merciful to her.' 'The *Debellare superbos* should be my motto,'[1] he writes to his friend Belford; and in another letter he says: 'I always considered opposition and resistance as a challenge to do my worst.'[2] At bottom, pride, infinite, insatiable, senseless, is the mainspring, the only motive of all his actions. He acknowledges 'that he only wanted Cæsar's outsetting to make a figure among his coteraporaries,'[3] and that he only stoops to private conquests out of mere whim. He declares that he would not marry the first princess on earth, if he but thought she balanced a minute in her choice of him or of an emperor. He is held to be gay, brilliant, conversational; but this petulance of animal vigour is only external: he is cruel, jests savagely, in cool blood, like a hangman, about the harm which he has done or means to do. Mark in what manner he reassures a poor servant who is troubled at having given up Clarissa to him. 'The affair of Miss Betterton was a youthful frolick. . . . I went into mourning for her, though abroad at the time. A distinction I have ever paid to those worthy creatures who died in childbed by me. . . . Why this squeamishness, then, honest Joseph?'[4] At that time, and in this land, the roysterers of those days threw the human body in the sewers. One gentleman, a friend of Lovelace, 'tricked a farmer's daughter, a pretty girl, up to town, . . . drank her light-hearted, . . . then to the play, . . . then to the bagnio, ruined her; kept her on a fortnight or three weeks; then left her to the mercy of the people of the bagnio (never paying for anything), who stript her of all her cloaths, and because she would not take on, threw her into prison, where she died in want and in despair.'[5] The rakes in France were only rascals,[6] here they were villains; wickedness with them poisoned love. Lovelace hates Clarissa even more than he loves her. He has a book in which he sets down, he says, 'all the family faults and the infinite trouble she herself has given me. When my heart is soft, and all her own, I can but turn to my memoranda, and harden myself at once.'[7] He is angry because she dares to defend herself, says that he'll teach her to vie with him in inventions, to make plots against and for her conqueror. It is a struggle between them, without truce or halting. Lovelace says of himself: 'What an industrious spirit have I! Nobody can say that I eat the bread of idleness; . . . certainly, with this active soul, I should have made a very great figure in whatever station I had filled.'[8] He assaults and besieges her, spends

[1] *Clarissa Harlowe*, i. Letter xxxiv. 223.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. Letter xliii. 315.
[3] *Ibid.* i. Letter xii. 65.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. Letter xviii. 89.
[5] *Ibid.* vii. Letter xxxviii. 122.
[6] See the *Mémoires* of the Marshal de Richelieu.
[7] *Clarissa Harlowe*, ii. Letter xxxix. 294.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. xxxiii. 232.

whole nights outside her house, gives the Harlowes servants of his own, invents stories, introduces imaginary personages, forges letters. There is no expense, fatigue, plot, disloyalty which he will not undertake. All weapons are the same to him. He digs and plans even when away, ten, twenty, fifty saps, which all meet in the same mine. He has a remedy for everything; he is ready for everything; divines, dares everything, against all duty, humanity, common sense, in spite of the prayers of his friends, the entreaties of Clarissa, his own remorse. Excessive will, here as with the Harlowes, becomes a steel cog-wheel, which twists out of shape and breaks to pieces what it ought to bend, so that at last, by blind impetuosity, it is broken by its own impetus, over the ruins it has made.

Against such assaults what resources has Clarissa? A will as determined as his own. She also is armed for war, and admits that she has as much of her father's spirit as of her mother's gentleness. Though gentle, though readily driven into Christian humility, she 'had hoped to be an example to young persons' of her sex; she possesses the firmness of a man, and above all a masculine reflection.[1] What self-scrutiny! what vigilance! what minute and indefatigable observation of her conduct, and of that of others![2] No action, or word, involuntary or other gesture of Lovelace is unobserved by her, uninterpreted, unjudged, with the perspicacity and clearness of mind of a diplomatist and a moralist! You must read these long conversations, in which no word is used without calculation, genuine duels daily renewed, with death, nay, with dishonour before her. She knows it, is not disturbed, remains ever mistress of herself, never exposes herself, is not stunned, defends every inch of ground, feeling that all the world is on his side, no one for her, that she loses ground, and will lose more, that she will fall, that she is falling. And yet she bends not. What a change since Shakspeare! Whence comes this new and original idea of woman? Who has encased these yielding and tender innocents with such heroism and calculation? Secularised Puritanism. Clarissa 'never looked upon any duty, much less a voluntary vowed one, with indifference.' She has passed her whole life in looking at these duties. She has placed certain principles before her, has reasoned upon them, applied them to the various circumstances of life, has fortified herself on every point with maxims, distinctions, and arguments. She has set round her, like bristling and multiplied ramparts,

[1] See (vol. vii. Letter xlix.) among other things her last Will.

[2] She makes out statistics and a classification of Lovelace's merits and faults, with subdivisions and numbers. Take an example of this positive and practical English logic: 'That such a husband might unsettle me in all my own principles, and hasard my future hopes. That he has a very immoral character to women. That knowing this, it is a high degree of impurity to think of joining in wedlock with such a man.' She keeps all her writings, her memorandums, summaries or analyses of her own letters.

a numberless army of inflexible precepts. We can only reach her by turning over her whole mind and her whole past. This is her force, and also her weakness; for she is so carefully defended by her fortifications, that she is a prisoner; her principles are a snare to her, and her virtue destroys her. She wishes to preserve too much decorum. She refuses to apply to a magistrate, for it would make public the family quarrels. She does not resist her father openly; that would be against filial humility. She does not repel Solmes violently, and like a hound, as he is; it would be contrary to feminine delicacy. She will not leave home with Miss Howe; that might injure the character of her friend. She reproves Lovelace when he swears;[1] a good Christian ought to protest against scandal. She is argumentative and pedantic, a politician and a preacher; she wearies us, she acts not like a woman. When a room is on fire, a young girl flies barefooted, and does not do what Miss Clarissa does—ask for her slippers. I am very sorry for it, but I say it with bated breath, Clarissa had a little mind; her virtue is like the piety of devotees, literal and over-nice. She does not carry you away, she has always her catechism in her hand; she does not discover her duties, but follows instructions; she has not the audacity of great resolutions, she possesses more conscience and firmness than enthusiasm and genius.[2] This is the disadvantage of morality pushed to an extreme, no matter what the school or the aim is. By dint of regulating man, we narrow him.

Poor Richardson, unsuspiciously, has been at pains to set the thing forth in broad light, and has created Sir Charles Grandison 'a man of true honour.' I cannot say whether this model has converted many. There is nothing so insipid as an edifying hero. This Sir Charles is as correct as an automaton; he passes his life in weighing his duties, and 'with an air of gallantry.'[3] When he goes to visit a sick person, he has scruples about going on a Sunday, but reassures his conscience by saying, 'I am afraid I must borrow of the Sunday some hours on my journey; but visiting the sick is an act of mercy.'[4] Would you believe that such a man could fall in love? Such is the case, however, but in a manner of his own. Thus he writes to his betrothed:

'And now, loveliest and dearest of women, allow me to expect the honour of a line, to let me know how much of the tedious month from last Thursday you will be so good to abate. . . . My utmost gratitude will ever be engaged by the con-

[1] 'Swearing is a most unmanly vice, and cursing as poor and low a one, since it proclaims the profligate's want of power and his wickedness at the same time; for could such a one punish as he speaks, he would be a fiend.'—Vol. ii. Letter xxxviii. 282.

[2] The contrary is the case with the heroines of George Sand's novels.

[3] See *Sir Charles Grandison*, 7 vols. 1811, iii. Letter xvi. 142: 'He received the letters, standing up, bowing; and kissed the papers with an air of gallantry, that I thought greatly became him.'

[4] *Ibid.* vi. Letter xxxi. 236.

descension, whenever you shall distinguish the day of the year, distinguished as it will be to the end of my life that shall give me the greatest blessing of it and confirm me. For ever yours, Charles Grandison.'[1]

A wax figure could not be more proper. All is in the same taste There are eight wedding-coaches, each with four horses; Sir Charles is attentive to old people; at table, the gentlemen, each with a napkin under his arm, wait upon the ladies; the bride is ever on the point of fainting; he throws himself at her feet in every kind of way:

'What, my love! In compliment to the best of parents, resume your usual presence of mind. I, else, who shall glory before a thousand witnesses in receiving the honour of your hand, shall be ready to regret that I acquiesced so cheerfully with the wishes of those parental friends for a public celebration.'[2]

Salutations begin, compliments fly about; a swarm of proprieties flutters around, like a troop of little love-cherubs, and their devout wings serve to sanctify the blessed tendernesses of the happy couple. Tears abound; Harriet bemoans the fate of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, whilst Sir Charles,

'In a soothing, tender, and respectful manner, put his arm round me, and taking my own handkerchief, unresisted, wiped away the tears as they fell on my cheek. Sweet humanity! Charming sensibility! Check not the kindly gush. Dewdrops of heaven! (wiping away my tears, and kissing the handkerchief), dew-drops of heaven, from a mind like that heaven mild and gracious!'[3]

It is too much; we are surfeited, we tell ourselves that these phrases should be accompanied by a mandoline. The most patient of mortals feels himself sick at heart when he has swallowed a thousand pages of this sentimental twaddle, and all the milk and water of love. To crown all, Sir Charles, seeing Harriet embrace her rival, sketches the plan of a little temple, dedicated to friendship, to be built on the very spot; it is the triumph of mythological bad taste. At the end, bouquets shower down as at the opera; all the characters sing in unison a chorus in praise of Sir Charles, and his wife says:

'But could he be otherwise than the best of husbands, who was the most dutiful of sons, who is the most affectionate of brothers; the most faithful of friends: who is good upon principle in every relation of life?'[4]

He is great, he is generous, delicate, pious, irreproachable; he has never done a mean action, nor made a wrong gesture. His conscience and his wig are unsullied. Amen! Let us canonise him, and stuff him with straw.

Nor, my dear Richardson, have you, great as you are, exactly all the wit which is necessary in order to have enough. By seeking to serve morality, you prejudice it. Do you know the effect of these edifying advertisements which you stick on at the beginning or end of

[1] *Sir Charles Grandison*, vi. Letter xxxiii. 252.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. Letter lii. 358.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. Letter xxxi. 233.
[4] *Ibid.* vii. Letter lxi. 336.

your books? We are repelled, lose emotion, see the black-gowned preacher come snuffling out of the worldly dress which he had assumed for an hour; we are annoyed by the deceit. Insinuate morality, but do not inflict it. Remember there is a substratum of rebellion in the human heart, and that if we too openly set ourselves to wall it up through discipline, it escapes and looks for free air outside. You print at the end of *Pamela* the catalogue of the virtues of which she is an example; the reader yawns, forgets his pleasure, ceases to believe, and asks himself if the heavenly heroine was not an ecclesiastical puppet, trotted out to give him a lesson. You relate at the end of *Clarissa Harlowe* the punishment of all the wicked, great and small, sparing none; the reader laughs, says that things happen otherwise in this world, and bids you put in here, like Arnolphe,[1] a description 'of the cauldrons in which the souls of those who have led evil lives are to boil in the infernal regions.' We are not such fools as you take us for. There is no need that you should shout to make us afraid; that you should write out the lesson by itself, and in capitals, in order to distinguish it. We love art, and you have a scant amount of it; we want to be pleased, and you don't care to please us. You copy all the letters, detail the conversations, tell everything, prune nothing; your novels fill many volumes; spare us, use the scissors; be a literary man, not a registrar of archives. Do not pour out your library of documents on the high-road. Art is different from nature; the latter draws out, the first condenses. Twenty letters of twenty pages do not display a character; but one sharp word does. You are rendered heavy by your conscience, which drags you along step by step and low on the ground; you are afraid of your genius; you rein it in; you dare not use loud cries and frank words for violent moments. You flounder into emphatic and well-written phrases;[2] you will not show nature as it is, as Shakspeare shows it, when, stung by passion as by a hot iron, it cries out, rears, and plunges over your barriers. You cannot love it, and your punishment is that you cannot see it.[3]

[1] A selfish and misanthropical cynic in Molière's *École des Femmes*.—TR.

[2] Clarissa and Pamela employ too many.

[3] In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, 1871, it is said, ch. vii.: 'To me I confess, *Clarissa Harlowe* is an unpleasant, not to say odious book. . . . If any book deserved the charge of sickly sentimentality, it is this; and that it should have once been so widely popular, and thought admirably adapted to instruct young women in lessons of virtue and religion, shows a strange and perverted state of the public taste, not to say public morals.' Mrs. Oliphant, in her *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George Second*, 1869, says of the same novel (ii. x. 264): 'Richardson was a respectable tradesman, . . . a good printer, . . . a comfortable soul, . . . never owing a guinea nor transgressing a rule of morality; and yet so much a poet, that he has added at least one character (Clarissa Harlowe) to the inheritance of the world, of which Shakspeare need not have been ashamed—the most celestial thing, the highest effort of his generation'.—TR.

V.

Fielding protests on behalf of nature; and certainly, to see his actions and his persons, we might think him made expressly for that a robust, strongly built man, above six feet high, sanguine, with an excess of good humour and animal spirits, loyal, generous, affectionate, and brave, but imprudent, extravagant, a drinker, a roysterer, ruined as it were by heirloom, having seen the ups and downs of life, bespattered, but always jolly. Lady Wortley Montague says of him: 'His happy constitution made him forget everything when he was before a venison party, or over a flask of champagne.'[1] Nature sways him; he is somewhat coarse but generous. He does not restrain himself, he indulges, he follows nature's bent, not too choice in his course, not confining himself to banks, muddy, but abundantly and in a broad channel. From the outset an abundance of health and physical impetuosity plunges him into gross jovial excess, and the immoderate sap of youth bubbles up in him until he marries and becomes ripe in years. He is gay, and seeks gaiety; he is careless, and has not even literary vanity. One day Garrick begged him to cut down an awkward scene, and told him 'that a repulse would flurry him so much, he should not be able to do justice to the part.' 'If the scene is not a good one, let them find that out.' Just as was foreseen, the house made a violent uproar, and the performer tried to quell it by retiring to the green-room, where the author was supporting his spirits with a bottle of champagne. 'What is the matter, Garrick? are they hissing me now?' 'Yes, just the same passage that I wanted you to retrench.' 'Oh,' replied the author, 'I did not give them credit for it; they have found it out, have they?'[2] In this easy manner he took all mischance. He went ahead without feeling the bruises much, like a confident man, whose heart expands and whose skin is thick. When he inherited some money he feasted, gave dinners to his neighbours, kept a pack of hounds and a lot of magnificent lackeys in yellow livery. In three years he had spent it all; but courage remained, he finished his law studies, wrote two folios on the rights of the crown, became a magistrate, destroyed bands of robbers, and earned in the most insipid of labours 'the dirtiest money upon earth.' Disgust, weariness did not affect him; he was too solidly made to have the nerves of a woman. Force, activity, invention, tenderness, all overflowed in him. He had a mother's fondness for his children, adored his wife, became almost mad when he lost her, found no other consolation than to weep with his maid-servant, and ended by marrying that good and honest girl, that he might give a mother to his children; the last trait in the portrait of this valiant plebeian heart, quick in telling all, possessing

[1] *Lady Montague's Letters*, ed. Lord Wharncliffe, 2d ed. 3 vols. 1837; Letter to the Countess of Bute, iii. 120.

[2] Roscoe's *Life of Fielding*, p. xxv.

no dislikes, but all the best parts of man, except delicacy. We read his books as we drink a pure, wholesome, and rough wine, which cheers and fortifies us, and which wants nothing but bouquet.

Such a man was sure to dislike Richardson. He who loves expansive and liberal nature, drives from him like foes the solemnity, sadness, and pruderies of the Puritans. To begin with, he caricatures Richardson. His first hero, Joseph, is the brother of Pamela, and resists the proposals of his mistress, as Pamela does those of her master. The temptation, touching in the case of a girl, becomes comical in that of a young man, and the tragic turns into the grotesque. Fielding laughs heartily, like Rabelais, like Scarron. He imitates the emphatic style; ruffles the petticoats and bobs the wigs; upsets with his rude jests all the seriousness of conventionality. If you are refined, or simply well dressed, don't go along with him. He will take you to prisons, inns, dunghills, the mud of the roadside; he will make you flounder among rollicking, scandalous, vulgar adventures, and crude pictures. He has plenty of words at command, and his sense of smell is not delicate. Mr. Joseph Andrews, after leaving Lady Booby, is felled to the ground, left naked in a ditch, for dead; a stage-coach came by; a lady objects to receive a naked man inside; and the gentlemen, 'though there were several greatcoats about the coach,' could not spare them; the coachman, who had two greatcoats spread under him, refused to lend either, lest they should be made bloody.[1] This is but the outset, judge of the rest. Joseph and his friend, the good Parson Adams, give and receive a vast number of cuffs; blows resound; cans of pigs' blood are thrown at their heads; dogs tear their clothes to pieces; they lose their horse. Joseph is so good-looking, that he is assailed by the maid-servant, 'obliged to take her in his arms and to shut her out of the room;'[2] they have never any money; they are threatened with being sent to prison. Yet they go on in a merry fashion, as their brothers in Fielding's other novels, Captain Booth and Tom Jones. These hailstorms of blows, these tavern brawls, this noise of broken warming-pans and basins flung at heads, this medley of incidents and downpouring of mishaps, combine to make the most joyous music. All these honest folk fight well, walk well, eat well, drink still better. It is a pleasure to observe these potent stomachs; roast-beef goes down into them as to its natural place. Do not say that these good arms practise too much on their neighbours' skins: the neighbours' hides are healthy, and always heal quickly. Decidedly life is a good thing, and we will go along with Fielding, smiling by the way, with a broken head and a bellyful.

Shall we merely laugh? There are many things to be seen on our journey: the sentiment of nature is a talent, like the understanding of certain rules; and Fielding, turning his back on Richardson, opens up a domain as wide as that of his rival. What we call nature is this brood

[1] *The Adventures of Joseph Andrews*, bk. i. ch. xii. [2] *Ibid.* i. ch. xviii.

of secret passions, often malicious, generally vulgar, always blind, which tremble and fret within us, ill-covered by the cloak of decency and reason under which we try to disguise them; we think we lead them, and they lead us; we think our actions our own, they are theirs. They are so many, so strong, so interwoven, so ready to rise, break forth, be carried away, that their movements elude all our reasoning and our grasp. This is Fielding's domain; his art and pleasure, like Molière's, are in lifting a corner of the cloak; his characters parade with a rational air, and suddenly, through a vista, the reader perceives the inner turmoil of vanities, follies, lusts, and secret rancours which make them move. Thus, when Tom Jones' arm is broken, philosopher Square comes to console him by an application of stoical maxims; but to prove to him that pain is an indifferent matter, he bites his tongue, and lets slip an oath or two; whereupon Parson Thwackum, his opponent and rival, assures him that his mishap is a warning of Providence, and both are nearly coming to blows.[1] Another time, the prison chaplain having aired his eloquence, and entreated the condemned man to repent, accepts from him a bowl of punch, because Scripture says nothing against this liquor; and after drinking, repeats his last sermon against the pagan philosophers. Thus unveiled, natural impulse has a grotesque appearance; the people advance gravely, cane in hand, but in our eyes they are all naked. Understand, they are every whit naked; and some of their attitudes are very lively. Ladies will do well not to enter here. This powerful genius, frank and joyous, loves boisterous fairs like Rubens; the red faces, beaming with good humour, sensuality, and energy, move about his pages, flutter hither and thither, and jostle each other, and their overflowing instincts break forth in violent actions. Out of such he creates his chief characters. He has none more lifelike than these, more broadly sketched in bold and dashing outline, with a more wholesome colour. If sober people like Allworthy remain in a corner of his vast canvas, characters full of natural impulse, like Western, stand out with a relief and brightness, never seen since Falstaff. Western is a country squire, a good fellow in the main, but a drunkard, always in the saddle, full of oaths, ready with coarse language, blows, a sort of dull carter, hardened and excited by the brutality of the race, the wildness of a country life, by violent exercises, by abuse of coarse food and strong drink, full of English and rustic pride and prejudice, having never been disciplined by the constraint of the world, because he lives in the country; nor by that of education, since he can hardly read; nor of reflection, since he cannot put two ideas together; nor of authority, because he is rich and a justice of the peace, and given up, like a noisy and creaking weathercock, to every gust of passion. When contradicted, he grows red, foams at the mouth, wishes to thrash some one. 'Doff thy clothes.' They are even obliged to stop him by main

[1] *History of a Foundling*, bk. v. ch. ii.

force. He hastens to go to Allworthy to complain of Tom Jones, who has dared to fall in love with his daughter:

'It's well for un I could not get at un: I'd a licked un: I'd a spoiled his caterwauling; I'd a taught the son of a whore to meddle with meat for his master. He shan't ever have a morsel of meat of mine, or a varden to buy it. If she will ha un, one smock shall be her portion. I'd sooner give my estate to the sinking fund, that it may be sent to Hanover, to corrupt our nation with.'[1]

Allworthy says he is very sorry for it:

'Pox o' your sorrow. It will do me abundance of good, when I have lost my only child, my poor Sophy, that was the joy of my heart, and all the hope and comfort of my age. But I am resolved I will turn her out o' doors; she shall beg, and starve, and rot in the streets. Not one hapenny, not a hapenny shall she ever hae o' mine. The son of a bitch was always good at finding a hare sitting and be rotted to'n; I little thought what puss he was looking after. But it shall be the worst he ever vound in his life. She shall be no better than carrion; the skin o'er it is all he shall ha, and zu you may tell un.'[2]

His daughter tries to reason with him; he storms. Then she speaks of tenderness and obedience; he leaps about the room for joy, and tears come to his eyes. Then she recommences her prayers; he grinds his teeth, clenches his fists, stamps his feet:

'I am determined upon this match, and ha him you shall, damn me, if shat unt. Damn me, if shat unt, though dost hang thyself the next morning.'[3]

He can find no reason; he can only tell her to be a good girl. He contradicts himself, defeats his own plans; is like a blind bull, which butts to right and left, doubles on his path, touches no one, and paws the ground. At the least sound he rushes head foremost, offensively, knowing not why. His ideas are only starts or transports of flesh and blood. Never has the animal so completely covered and absorbed the man. It makes him grotesque; he is so natural and so brute-like: he allows himself to be led, and speaks like a child. He says:

'I don't know how 'tis, but, Allworthy, you make me do always just as you please; and yet I have as good an estate as you, and am in the commission of the peace just as yourself.'[4]

Nothing holds or lasts with him; he is impulsive in everything; he lives but for the moment. Rancour, interest, no passions of long continuance affect him. He embraces people whom he just before wanted to knock down. Everything with him disappears in the fire of the passion of the hour, which comes over his brain, as it were, in sudden waves, which drown the rest. Now that he is reconciled to Tom, he cannot rest until Tom marries his daughter:

'To her, boy, to her, go to her. That's it, little honeys, O that's it. Well, what, is it all over? Hath she appointed the day, boy? What, shall it be to-morrow or next day? I shan't be put off a minute longer than next day, I am

[1] *History of a Foundling*. bk. vi. ch. x.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* xvi. ch. ii.
[4] *Ibid.* xviii. ch. ix.

resolved. . . . I tell thee it is all flimflam. Zoodikers! she'd have the wedding to-night with all her heart. Would'st not, Sophy? . . . Where the devil is Allworthy? . . . Harkee, Allworthy, I'll bet thee five pounds to a crown, we have a boy to-morrow nine months. But prithee, tell me what wut ha? Wut ha Burgundy, Champaigne, or what? For please Jupiter, we'll make a night on't.'[1]

And when he becomes a grandfather, he spends his time in the nursery, 'where he declares the tattling of his little granddaughter, who is above a year and a half old, is sweeter music than the finest cry of dogs in England.'[2] This is pure nature, and no one has displayed it more free, more impetuous, ignoring all rule, more abandoned to physical passions, than Fielding.

It is not because he loves it like the great impartial artists, Shakspeare and Goethe; on the contrary, he is eminently a moralist; and it is one of the great marks of the age, that reformatory designs are as decided with him as with others. He gives his fictions a practical aim, and commends them by saying that the serious and tragic tone sours, whilst the comic style disposes men to be 'more full of good humour and benevolence.'[3] Moreover, he satirises vice; he looks upon the passions not as simple forces, but as objects of approbation or blame. At every step he suggests moral conclusions; he wants us to take sides; he discusses, excuses, or condemns. He writes an entire novel in an ironical style,[4] to attack and destroy rascality and treason. He is more than a painter, he is a judge, and the two parts agree in him. For a psychology produces a morality: where there is an idea of man, there is an ideal of man; and Fielding, who has seen in man nature as opposed to law, praises in man nature as opposed to law; so that, according to him, virtue is but an instinct. Generosity in his eyes is, like all sources of action, a primitive inclination; like all sources of action, it flows on, receiving no good from catechisms and phrases; like all sources of action, it flows at times too copious and quick. Take it as it is, and do not try to oppress it under a discipline, or to replace it by an argument. Mr. Richardson, your heroes, so correct, constrained, so carefully made up with their impedimenta of maxims, are cathedral vergers, of use but to drone in a procession. Square or Thwackum, your tirades on philosophical or Christian virtue are mere words, only fit to be heard after dinner. Virtue is in the mood and the blood; a gossipy education and cloistral severity do not assist it. Give me a man, not a show-mannikin or a mere machine, to spout phrases. My hero is the man who is born generous, as a dog is born affectionate, and a horse brave. I want a living heart, full of warmth and force, not a dry pedant, bent on squaring all his actions. This ardent character will perhaps carry the hero too far; I pardon his escapades. He will get drunk unawares; he will pick up a girl on his way;

[1] *History of a Foundling*, xviii. ch, xii.
[2] Last chapter of the *History of a Foundling*. [3] Preface to *Joseph Andrews*
[4] *Jonathan Wild.*

he will hit out with a zest: he will not refuse a duel; he will suffer a fine lady to appreciate him, and will accept her purse; he will be imprudent, will injure his reputation, like Tom Jones; he will be a bad manager, and will get into debt, like Booth. Pardon him for having muscles, nerves, senses, and that overflow of anger or ardour which urges forward animals of a noble breed. But he will let himself be beaten till he bleeds, before he betrays a poor gamekeeper. He will pardon his mortal enemy readily, from sheer kindness, and will send him money secretly. He will be loyal to his mistress, and will be faithful to her, spite of all offers, in the worst destitution, and without the least hope of winning her. He will be liberal with his purse, his trouble, his sufferings, his blood; he will not boast of it; he will have neither pride, vanity, affectation, nor dissimulation; bravery and kindness will abound in his heart, as good water in a good spring. He may be stupid, like Captain Booth, a gambler, even extravagant, unable to manage his affairs, liable one day through temptation to be unfaithful to his wife; but he will be so sincere in his repentance, his error will be so involuntary, he will be so carefully, genuinely tender, that she will love him exceedingly,[1] and in good truth he will deserve it. He will be a nurse to her when she is ill, behave as a mother to her; he will himself see to her lying-in; he will feel towards her the adoration of a lover, always, before all the world, even before Miss Matthews, who seduced him. He says: 'If I had the world, I was ready to lay it at my Amelia's feet; and so, Heaven knows, I would ten thousand worlds.'[2] He weeps like a child on thinking of her; he listens to her like a little child. 'I believe I am able to recollect much the greatest part (of what she uttered); for the impression is never to be effaced from my memory.'[3] He dressed himself 'with all the expedition imaginable, singing, whistling, hurrying, attempting by every method to banish thought,'[4] and galloped away because he cannot endure her tears. In this soldier's body, under this brawler's thick breastplate, there is a true woman's heart, which melts, which a trifle disturbs, when she whom he loves is in question; timid in its tenderness, inexhaustible in devotion, in trust, in self-denial, in the communication of its feelings. When a man possesses this, overlook the rest; with all his excesses and his follies, he is better than your well-dressed devotees.

To this we reply: You do well to defend nature, but let it be on condition that you suppress nothing. One thing is wanted in your

[1] Amelia is the perfect English wife, an excellent cook, so devoted as to pardon her husband his accidental infidelities, always looking forward to the accoucheur. She says even (bk. iv. ch. vi.), 'Dear Billy, though my understanding be much inferior to yours,' etc. She is excessively modest, always blushing and tender. Bagillard having written her some love-letters, she throws them away, and says (bk. iii. ch. ix.): 'I would not have such a letter in my possession for the universe; I thought my eyes contaminated with reading it.'

[2] *Amelia*, bk. ii. ch. viii. [3] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. i. [4] *Ibid.* bk iii. ch. ii

strongly-built folks—refinement; the delicate dreams, enthusiastic elevation, and trembling delicacy, exist in nature equally with coarse vigour, noisy hilarity, and frank kindness. Poetry is true, like prose; and if there are eaters and boxers, there are also knights and artists Cervantes, whom you imitate, and Shakspeare, whom you recall, had this refinement, and they have painted it; in this abundant harvest, with which you fill your arms, you have forgotten the flowers. We tire at last of your fisticuffs and tavern bills. You flounder too readily in cowhouses, among the ecclesiastical pigs of Parson Trulliber. We would fain see you have more regard for the modesty of your heroines; wayside accidents raise their tuckers too often; and Fanny, Sophia, Mrs. Heartfree, may continue pure, yet we cannot help remembering the assaults which have lifted their petticoats. You are so rude yourself, that you are insensible to what is atrocious. You persuade Tom Jones falsely, yet for an instant, that Mrs. Waters, whom he has made his mistress, is his mother, and you leave the reader long buried in the shame of this supposition. And then you are obliged to become unnatural in order to depict love; you can give but constrained letters; the transports of your Tom Jones are only the author's phrases. For want of ideas he declaims odes. You are only aware of the impetuosity of the senses, the upwelling of the blood, the effusion of tenderness, but not of the nervous exaltation and poetic rapture. Man, such as you conceive him, is a good buffalo; and perhaps he is the hero required by a people which is itself called John Bull.

VI.

At all events this hero is powerful and formidable; and if at this period you collect in your mind the scattered features of the faces which the novel-writers have made pass before us, you will feel yourself transported into a half-barbarous state, and to a race whose energy must terrify or revolt all your gentleness. Now open a more literal copyist of life: they are doubtless all such, and declare—Fielding amongst them—that if they imagine a feature, it is because they have seen it; but Smollett has this advantage, that, being mediocre, he chalks out the figures insipidly, prosaically, without transforming them by the illumination of genius: the joviality of Fielding and the rigour of Richardson are not there to lit up or ennoble the pictures. Observe carefully Smollett's manners; listen to the confessions of this imitator of Lesage, who reproaches that author with being gay, and jesting with the mishaps of his hero. He says:

'The disgraces of Gil Blas are, for the most part, such as rather excite mirth than compassion: he himself laughs at them, and his transitions from distress to happiness, or at least ease, are so sudden that neither the reader has time to pity him, nor himself to be acquainted with affliction. This conduct . . . prevents that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world. I have attempted to represent modest merit

struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed from his own want of experience as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind.'[1]

It is no longer merely showers of blows, but also of knife and sword thrusts, as well as pistol shots. In such a world, when a girl goes out she runs the risk of coming back a woman; and when a man goes out, he runs the risk of not coming back at all. The women bury their nails in the faces of the men; the well-bred gentlemen, like Peregrine Pickle, whip gentlemen soundly. Having deceived a husband, who refuses to demand satisfaction, Peregrine calls his two servants, 'and ordered them to duck him in the canal.'[2] Misrepresented by a curate, whom he has horsewhipped, he gets an innkeeper 'to rain a shower of blows upon his (the priest's) carcass,' who also 'laid hold of one of his ears with his teeth, and bit it unmercifully.'[3] I could quote from memory a score more of outrages begun or completed. Savage insults, broken jaws, men on the ground beaten with sticks, the churlish sourness of conversations, the coarse brutality of jests, give an idea of a pack of bull-dogs eager to fight each other, who, when they begin to get lively, still amuse themselves by tearing away pieces of flesh. A Frenchman can hardly endure the story of *Roderick Random*, or rather that of Smollett, when he is in a man-of-war. He is pressed, that is to say, carried off by force, knocked down, attacked with 'cudgels and drawn cutlasses,' 'pinioned like a malefactor,' and rolled on board, covered with blood, before the sailors, who laugh at his wounds; and one of them, 'seeing my hair clotted together with blood, as it were, into distinct cords, took notice that my bows were manned with the red ropes, instead of my side.'[4] 'He desired one of his fellow-captives, who was unfettered, to take a handkerchief out of his pocket, and tie it round his head to stop the bleeding; he pulled out his handkerchief, 'tis true, but sold it before my face to a bum-boat woman for a quart of gin.' Captain Oakum declares he will have no more sick in his ship, ordered them to be brought on the quarter-deck, commanded that some should receive a round dozen; some spitting blood, others fainting from weakness, whilst not a few became delirious; many died, and of the sixty-one sick, only a dozen remained alive.[5] To get into this dark, suffocating hospital, swarming with vermin, it is necessary to creep under the close hammocks, and forcibly separate them with the shoulders, before you can reach the patients. Read the story of Miss Williams, a wealthy young girl, of good family, reduced to the trade of a prostitute, robbed, hungry, sick, shivering, strolling about the streets in the long winter nights, amongst 'a number of naked wretches reduced to rags and filth, huddled together like swine, in the corner of a dark alley,' who depend 'upon the addresses of the lowest class, and are fain to

[1] Preface to *Roderick Random*. [2] *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. lx.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. xxix. [4] *Ibid.* ch. xxiv. [5] *Ibid.* ch. xxvii.

allay the rage of hunger and cold with gin; degenerate into a brutal insensibility, rot and die upon a dunghill.'[1] She was thrown into Bridewell, where, she says, 'in the midst of a hellish crew I was subjected to the tyranny of a barbarian, who imposed upon me tasks that I could not possibly perform, and then punished my incapacity with the utmost rigour and inhumanity. I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it, during which miserable intervals I was robbed by my fellow-prisoners of everything about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings: I was not only destitute of necessaries, but even of food, so that my wretchedness was extreme.' One night she tried to hang herself. Two of her fellow-prisoners, who watched her, prevented her. 'In the morning my attempt was published among the prisoners, and punished with thirty stripes, the pain of which, co-operating with my disappointment and disgrace, bereft me of my senses, and threw me into an ecstasy of madness, during which I tore the flesh from my bones with my teeth, and dashed my head against the pavement.'[2] In vain you turn your eyes on the hero of the novel, Roderick Random, to repose a little after such a spectacle. He is sensual and coarse, like Fielding's heroes, but not good and jovial as these. The generous wine of Fielding, in Smollett's hands, becomes brandy of the dram-shop. His heroes are selfish; they revenge themselves barbarously. Roderick oppresses the faithful Strap, and ends by marrying him to a prostitute. Peregrine Pickle attacks by a most brutal and cowardly plot the honour of a young girl, whom he wants to marry, and who is the sister of his best friend. We get to hate his rancorous, concentrated, obstinate character, which is at once that of an absolute king accustomed to please himself at the expense of others' happiness, and that of a boor with only the varnish of education. We should be uneasy at living near him; he is good for nothing but to shock or tyrannise over others. We avoid him as we would a dangerous beast; the sudden rush of animal passion and the force of his firm will are so overpowering in him, that when he fails he becomes outrageous. He draws his sword against an innkeeper; he must bleed him, grows mad. Everything, even to his generosities, is spoiled by pride; all, even to his gaieties, is clouded by harshness. Peregrine's amusements are barbarous, and those of Smollett are after the same style. He exaggerates caricature; he thinks to amuse us by showing us mouths gaping to the ears, and noses half-a-foot long; he magnifies a national prejudice or a professional trick until it absorbs the whole character; he jumbles together the most repulsive oddities,—a Lieutenant Lismahago half roasted by Red Indians; old jack-tars who pass their life in shouting and travestying all sorts of ideas into their nautical jargon; old maids as ugly as monkeys, as withered as skeletons, and as sour as vinegar; maniacs steeped in pedantry, hypochondria, misanthropy, and silence. Far from sketching them slightly, as Le Sage

[1] *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. xxiii. [2] *Ibid.*

does in *Gil Blas*, he brings into prominent relief each disagreeable feature, overloads it with details, without considering whether they are too numerous, without reflecting that they are excessive, without feeling that they are odious, without perceiving that they are disgusting. The public whom he addresses is on a level with his energy and his coarseness; and in order to move such nerves, a writer cannot strike too hard.[1]

But, at the same time, to civilise this barbarity and to control this violence, a faculty appears, common to all, authors and public: serious reflection attached to the observation of character. Their eyes are turned toward the inner man. They note exactly the individual peculiarities, and mark them with such a precise imprint that their personage becomes a type, which cannot be forgotten. They are psychologists. The title of a comedy of old Ben Jonson's, *Every Man in his Humour*, indicates how this taste is ancient and national amongst them. Smollett writes a whole novel, *Humphrey Clinker*, on this idea. No action; the book is a collection of letters written during a tour in Scotland and England. Each of the travellers, after his bent of mind, judges variously of the same objects. A generous, grumbling old gentleman, who amuses himself by thinking himself ill, a crabbed old maid in search of a husband; a lady's maid, ingenuous and vain, who bravely mutilates her spelling; a series of originals, who one after another bring their oddities on the scene,—such are the characters: the pleasure of the reader consists in recognising their humour in their style, in foreseeing their follies, in perceiving the thread which pulls each of their motions, in verifying the agreement of their ideas and their actions. Push this study of human peculiarities to excess, and you will come upon the origin of Sterne's talent.

VII.

Figure to yourself a man who goes on a journey, wearing on his eyes a pair of marvellously magnifying spectacles. A hair on his hand, a speck on a tablecloth, a fold of a moving garment, will interest him: at this rate he will not go very far; he will go six steps in a day, and will not quit his room. So Sterne writes four

[1] In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, the author says, ch. v. 159: 'What is the character of most of these books (novels) which were to correct follies and regulate morality? Of a great many of them, and especially those of Fielding and Smollett, the prevailing features are grossness and licentiousness. Love degenerates into a mere animal passion. . . . The language of the characters abounds in oaths and gross expressions. . . . The heroines allow themselves to take part in conversations which no modest woman would have heard without a blush. And yet these novels were the delight of a bygone generation, and were greedily devoured by women as well as men. Are we therefore to conclude that our great-great-grandmothers . . . were less chaste and moral than their female posterity? I answer, certainly not; but we must infer that they were inferior to them in delicacy and refinement. They were accustomed to hear a spade called a spade, and words which would shock the more fastidious ear in the reign of Queen Victoria were then in common and daily use.'—TR.

volumes to record the birth of his hero. He perceives the infinitely little, and describes the imperceptible. A man parts his hair on one side: this, according to Sterne, depends on his whole character, which is of a piece with that of his father, his mother, his uncle, and his whole ancestry; it depends on the structure of his brain, which depends on the circumstances of his conception and his birth, and these on the fancies of his parents, the humour of the moment, the talk of the preceding hour, the contrarieties of the last curate, a cut thumb, twenty knots made on a bag; I know not how many things besides. The six or eight volumes of *Tristram Shandy* are employed in summing them up; for the smallest and dullest incident, a sneeze, a badly-shaven beard, drags after it an inextricable network of inter-involved causes, which from above, below, right and left, by invisible prolongations and ramifications, are buried in the depths of a character and in the remote vistas of events. Instead of extracting, like the novel-writers, the principal root, Sterne, with marvellous devices and success, devotes himself to drawing out the tangled skein of numberless threads, which are sinuously immersed and dispersed, so as to suck in from all sides the sap and the life. Slender, intertwined, buried as they are, he finds them; he extricates them without breaking, brings them to the light; and there, where we fancied was but a stalk, we see with wonder the underground mass and vegetation of the multiplied fibres and fibrils, by which the visible plant grows and is supported.

This is truly a strange talent, made up of blindness and insight, which resembles those diseases of the retina in which the over-excited nerve becomes at once dull and penetrating, incapable of seeing what the most ordinary eyes perceive, capable of observing what the most piercing sight misses. In fact, Sterne is a sickly and eccentric humorist, an ecclesiastic and a libertine, a fiddler and a philosopher, 'who whimpered over a dead donkey, but left his mother to starve,' selfish in act, selfish in word, who in everything is the reverse of himself and of others. His book is like a great storehouse of articles of *virtu*, where the curiosities of all ages, kinds, and countries lie jumbled in a heap; texts of excommunication, medical consultations, passages of unknown or imaginary authors, scraps of scholastic erudition, strings of absurd histories, dissertations, addresses to the reader. His pen leads him; he has neither sequence nor plan; nay, when he lights upon anything orderly, he purposely contorts it; with a kick he sends the pile of folios next to him over the history he has commenced, and dances on the top of them. He delights in disappointing us, in sending us astray by interruptions and outrages.[1] Gravity displeases him, he treats it as

[1] There is a distinct trace of a spirit similar to that which is here sketched in a select few of the English writers. Pultock's *Peter Wilkins the Flying Man*. Amory's *Life of John Buncle*, and Southey's *Doctor* are instances of this. Rabelais is probably their prototype.—TR.

a hypocrite; to his liking folly is better, and he paints himself in Yorick. In a well-constituted mind ideas march one after another, with uniform motion or acceleration; in this uncouth brain they jump about like a rout of masks at a carnival, in troops, each dragging his neighbour by the feet, head, coat, amidst the most promiscuous and unforeseen hubbub. All his little lopped phrases are somersaults; we pant as we read. The tone is never for two minutes the same; laughter comes, then the beginning of emotion, then scandal, then wonder, then tenderness, then laughter again. The mischievous joker pulls and entangles the threads of all our feelings, and makes us go hither, thither, irregularly, like puppets. Amongst these various threads there are two which he pulls more willingly than the rest. Like all men who have nerves, he is subject to tenderness; not that he is really kindly and tender; on the contrary, his life is that of an egotist; but on certain days he must needs weep, and he makes us weep with him. He is moved on behalf of a captive bird, of a poor ass, which, accustomed to blows, 'looked up pensive,' and seemed to say, 'Don't thrash me with it (the halter); but if you will, you may.'[1] He will write a couple of pages on the attitude of this donkey, and Priam at the feet of Achilles was not more touching. Thus in a silence, in an oath, in the most trifling domestic action, he hits upon exquisite refinements and little heroisms, a sort of charming flowers, invisible to everybody else, which grow in the dust of the driest road. One day Uncle Toby, the poor sick captain, catches, after 'infinite attempts,' a big buzzing fly, who has cruelly tormented him all dinner-time; he gets up, crosses the room on his suffering leg, and opening the window, cries: 'Go, poor devil, get thee gone; why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.'[2] This womanish sensibility is too fine to be described; we should have to give a whole story—that of Lefevre, for instance—that the perfume might be inhaled; this perfume evaporates as soon as we touch it, and is like the weak fleeting odour of the plants, brought for one moment into a sick-chamber. What still more increases this sad sweetness, is the contrast of the free and easy waggeries which, like a hedge of nettles, encircles them on all sides. Sterne, like all men whose mechanism is over-excited, has irregular appetites. He loves the nude, not from a feeling of the beautiful, and in the manner of painters, not from sensuality and frankness like Fielding, not from a search after pleasure, like Dorat, Boufflers, and all those refined pleasure-seekers, who at the same time were rhyming and enjoying themselves in France. If he goes into dirty places, it is because they are forbidden and not frequented. What he seeks there is singularity and scandal. The allurement of this forbidden fruit is not the fruit, but the prohibition; for he bites by preference where

[1] Sterne's Works, 7 vols., 1783, 3; *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, vii ch. xxxii,

[2] *Ibid.* 1, ii. ch. xii.

the fruit is withered or worm-eaten. That an epicurean delights in detailing the pretty sins of a pretty woman is nothing wonderful; but that a novelist takes pleasure in watching the bedroom of a musty, fusty old couple, in observing the consequences of the fall of a burning chestnut in a pair of breeches,[1] in detailing the questions of Mrs. Wadman on the consequences of wounds in the groin,[2] can only be explained by the aberration of a perverted fancy, which finds its amusement in repugnant ideas, as spoiled palates are pleased by the pungent flavour of mouldy cheese.[3] Thus, to read Sterne we should wait for days when we are in a peculiar kind of humour, days of spleen, rain, or when through nervous irritation we are disgusted with rationality. In fact, his characters are as unreasonable as himself. He sees in man nothing but fancy, and what he calls the hobby-horse—Uncle Toby's taste for fortifications, Mr. Shandy's fancy for oratorical tirades and philosophical systems. This hobby-horse, according to him, is like a wart, so small at first that we hardly perceive it, and only when it is in a strong light; but it gradually increases, becomes covered with hairs, grows red, and buds out all around: its possessor, who is pleased with and admires it, nourishes it, until at last it is changed into a vast wen, and the whole face disappears under the invasion of the parasite excrescence. No one has equalled Sterne in the history of these human hypertrophies; he puts down the seed, feeds it gradually, makes the propagating threads creep round about, shows the little veins and microscopic arteries which inosculate within, counts the palpitations of the blood which passes through them, explains their changes of colour and increase of bulk. The psychological observer attains here one of his extreme developments. A far advanced art is necessary to describe, beyond the confines of regularity and health, the exception or the degeneration; and the English novel is completed here by adding to the representation of form the picture of deformations.

VIII.

The moment approaches when purified manners will, by purifying the novel, impress upon it its final character. Of the two great tendencies manifested by it, native brutality and intense reflection, one at last conquers the other: literature, grown severe, expels from fiction the coarseness of Smollett and the indecencies of Sterne; and the novel, in every respect moral, before falling into the almost prudish hands of

[1] *Tristram Shandy*, 2, iv. ch. xxvii. [2] *Ibid.* 3, ix. ch. xx.

[3] Sterne, Goldsmith, Burke, Sheridan, Moore, have a tone of their own, which comes from their blood, or from their proximate or distant parentage—the Irish tone. So Hume, Robertson, Smollett, W. Scott, Burns, Beattie, Reid, D. Stewart, etc., have the Scotch tone. In the Irish or Celtic tone we find an excess of chivalry, sensuality, expansion; in short, a mind less equally balanced, more sympathetic and less practical. The Scotchman on the other hand, is an Englishman, either slightly refined or narrowed, because he has suffered more and fasted more.

Miss Burney, passes into the noble hands of Goldsmith. His *Vicar of Wakefield* is 'a prose idyl,' somewhat spoilt by phrases too well written, but at bottom as homely as a Flemish picture. Observe in Terburg or Mieris' paintings a woman at market or a burgomaster emptying his long glass of beer: the faces are vulgar, the ingenuousness is comical, the cookery occupies the place of honour; yet these good folk are so peaceful, so contented with their small but secure happiness, that we envy them. The impression left by Goldsmith's book is pretty much the same. The excellent Dr. Primrose is a country clergyman, the whole of whose adventures have for a long time consisted in 'migrations from the blue bed to the brown.' He has cousins, 'even to the fortieth remove,' who came to eat his dinner and sometimes to borrow a pair of boots. His wife, who has all the education of the time, is a perfect cook, can almost read, excels in pickling and preserving, and at dinner gives the history of every dish. His daughters aspire to elegance, and even 'make a wash for the face over the fire.' His son Moses gets cheated at the fair, and sells the pony for a gross of green spectacles. Primrose himself writes treatises, which no one buys, against second marriages of the clergy; writes beforehand in his wife's epitaph, though she was still living, that she was the only wife of Dr. Primrose, and by way of encouragement, places this piece of eloquence in an elegant frame over the chimney-piece. But the household continues the even tenor of its way; the daughters and the mother slightly domineer over the father of the family; he lets them, like a good fellow; and now and again delivers himself at most of an innocent jest, busies himself in his new farm, with his two horses, wall-eyed Blackberry and the other without a tail:

'Nothing could exceed the neatness of my enclosures, the elms and hedge-rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. . . . Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green. . . . (It) consisted but of one story, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness; the walls on the inside were nicely whitewashed. . . . Though the same room served us for parlour and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates, and coppers, being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved, and did not want richer furniture.'[1]

They make hay all together, sit under the honeysuckle to drink a bottle of gooseberry wine; the girls sing, the two little ones read; and the parents 'would stroll down the sloping field, that was embellished with blue bells and centaury:'

'But let us have one bottle more, Deborah, my life, and Moses, give us a good song. What thanks do we not owe to Heaven for thus bestowing tranquillity, health, and competence! I think myself happier now than the greatest monarch upon earth. He has no such fire-side, nor such pleasant faces about it.'

[1] *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. iv. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xvii.

Such is moral happiness. Their misfortune is no less moral. The poor vicar has lost his fortune, and, removing to a small living, turns farmer. The squire of the neighbourhood seduces and carries off his eldest daughter; his house takes fire; his arm was burnt in a terrible manner in saving his two little children. He is put in prison, amongst wretches and rogues, who swear and blaspheme, in a vile atmosphere, sleeping on straw, feeling that his illness increases, foreseeing that his family will soon be without bread, learning that his daughter is dying. Yet he does not give way: he remains a priest and head of a family, prescribes to each of them his duty; encourages, consoles, orders, preaches to the prisoners, endures their coarse jests, reforms them; establishes in the prison useful work, and 'institutes fines for punishment and rewards for industry.' It is not hardness of heart nor a morose temperament which gives him strength; he has the most paternal soul, the most sociable, humane, open to gentle emotions and familiar tenderness. He says:

'I have no resentment now; and though he (the squire) has taken from me what I held dearer than all his treasures, though he has wrung my heart (for I am sick almost to fainting, very sick, my fellow-prisoner), yet that shall never inspire me with vengeance. . . . If this (my) submission can do him any pleasure, let him know, that if I have done him any injury, I am sorry for it. . . . I should detest my own heart, if I saw either pride or resentment lurking there. On the contrary, as my oppressor has been once my parishioner, I hope one day to present him up an unpolluted soul at the eternal tribunal.'[1]

Nothing is effectual: the wretch haughtily repulses the noble application of the vicar, and in addition causes his second daughter to be carried off, and the eldest son thrown into prison under a false accusation of murder. At this moment all the affections of the father are wounded, all his consolations lost, all his hopes ruined. 'His heart weeps to behold' all this misery, he was going to curse the cause of it all; but soon, returning to his profession and his duty, he thinks how he will prepare to fit his son and himself for eternity, and by way of being useful to as many people as he can, he wishes at the same time to exhort his fellow-prisoners. He 'made an effort to rise on the straw, but wanted strength, and was able only to recline against the wall; my son and his mother supported me on either side.'[2] In this condition he speaks, and his sermon, contrasting with his condition, is the more moving. It is a dissertation in the English style, made up of close reasoning, seeking only to establish that, from the nature of pleasure and pain, the wretched must be repaid the balance of their sufferings in the life hereafter. We see the sources of this virtue, born of Christianity and natural kindness, but long nourished by inner reflection. Meditation, which usually produces only phrases, results with Dr. Primrose in actions. Verily reason has here taken the helm,

[1] *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. xxviii. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xxviii.

and it has taken it without oppressing other feelings; a rare and excellent spectacle, which, uniting and harmonising in one character the best features of the manners and morals of the time and country, creates an admiration and love for pious and orderly, domestic and disciplined, laborious and rural life. Protestant and English virtue has not a more approved and amiable exemplar. Religious, affectionate, rational, the Vicar unites dispositions which seemed irreconcilable; a clergyman, a farmer, a head of a family, he enhances those characters which appeared fit only for comic or homely parts.

IX.

In the centre of this group stands a strange character, the most esteemed of his time, a sort of literary dictator. Richardson was his friend, and gave him essays for his paper; Goldsmith, with an engaging vanity, admires him, whilst he suffers himself to be continually outshone by him; Miss Burney imitates his style, and reveres him as a father. Gibbon the historian, Reynolds the painter, Garrick the actor, Burke the orator, Sir William Jones the Orientalist, come to his club to converse with him. Lord Chesterfield, who had lost his favour, vainly tried to regain it, by proposing to assign to him, on every word in the language, the authority of a dictator.[1] Boswell dogs his steps, sets down his opinions, and at night fills quartos with them. His criticism becomes law; men crowd to hear him talk; he is the arbiter of style. Let us transport in imagination this ruler of mind, Dr. Samuel Johnson, into France, among the pretty drawing-rooms, full of elegant philosophers and epicurean manners; the violence of the contrast will mark better than all argument, the bent and predilections of the English mind.

There appears then a man whose 'person was large, robust, approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency,'[2] with a gloomy and unpolished air, 'his countenance disfigured by the king's evil,' and blinking with one of his eyes, 'in a full suit of plain brown clothes,' and with not overclean linen, suffering from morbid melancholy since his birth, and moreover a hypochondriac.[3] In company he would sometimes retire to a window or corner of a room, and mutter a Latin verse or a prayer.[4] At other times, in a recess, he would roll his head, sway his body backward and forward, stretch out and then convulsively draw back his leg. His biographer relates that it 'was his constant anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, . . . so as that either his right or his left foot should constantly make the first actual movement; . . . when he had neglected or gone wrong

[1] See, in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. Croker, 1853, ch. xi. p. 85, Chesterfield's complimentary paper on Johnson's *Dictionary*, printed in the *World*.

[2] *Ibid* ch. xxx. 269. *Ibid.* ch. iii. 14 and 15

[4] *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 165, n. 4.

in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in the proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, walk briskly on and join his companion.'[1] People sat down to table. Suddenly, in a moment of abstraction, he stoops, and clenching hold of the foot of a lady, drew off her shoe.[2] Hardly was the dinner served when he darted on the food; 'his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others; (he) indulged with such intenseness, that, while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible.'[3] If by chance the hare was high, or the pie had been made with rancid butter, he no longer ate, but devoured. When at last his appetite was satisfied, and he consented to speak, he disputed, shouted, made a sparring-match of his conversation, snatched a triumph no matter how, laid down his opinion dogmatically, and maltreated those whom he was refuting. 'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig.'[4] 'My dear lady (to Mrs Thrale), talk no more of this; nonsense can be defended but by nonsense.'[5] 'One thing I know, which you don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil.'[6] 'In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, . . . sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen. . . . Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, . . . he used to blow out his breath like a whale,'[7] and swallow several cups of tea.

Then in a low voice, cautiously, men would ask Garrick and Boswell the history and habits of this strange being. He had lived like a cynic and an eccentric, having passed his youth reading miscellaneously, especially Latin folios, even those least known, such as Macrobius; he had found on a shelf in his father's shop the Latin works of Petrarch, whilst he was looking for apples, and had read them;[8] 'he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin poems of Politian.'[9] At twenty-five he had married for love a woman of about fifty, 'very fat, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, flaring and fantastic in her dress,'[10] and who had children as old as himself. Having come to London to earn his bread, some, seeing his convulsive grimaces, took him for an idiot; others, seeing his robust frame, advised him to buy a porter's knot.[11] For thirty years he worked like a hack for the publishers, whom he used to thrash when they became impertinent;[12] always shabby, having

[1] *Life of Johnson*, ch. xviii 166.
[2] *Ibid.* ch. xlviii. 439, n. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 159.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.
[5] *Ibid.* ch. xxii. 201.
[6] *Ibid.* ch. lxviii. 628.
[7] *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 166
[8] *Ibid.* ch. ii. 12.
[9] *Ibid.* ch. iv. 22.
[10] *Ibid.* ch. iv. 26
[11] *Ibid.* ch. v. 28, note 2
[12] *Ibid.* ch. vii. 46.

once fasted two days;[1] content when he could dine on 'a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny;'[2] having written *Rasselas* in eight nights, to pay for his mother's funeral. Now pensioned[3] by the king, freed from his daily labours, he gave way to his natural indolence, lying in bed often till mid-day and after. He is visited at that hour. We mount the stairs of a gloomy house on the north side of Fleet Street, the busy quarter of London, in a narrow and obscure court; and as we enter, we hear the scoldings of four old women and an old quack doctor, poor penniless creatures, bad in health and in disposition, whom he has rescued, whom he supports, who vex or insult him. We ask for the doctor, a negro opens the door; we gather round the master's bed; there are always many distinguished people at his levee, including even ladies. Thus surrounded, 'he declaims, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stays late,'[4] talks all the evening, goes out to enjoy in the streets the London mud and fog, picks up a friend to talk again, and is busy pronouncing oracles and maintaining his opinions till four in the morning.

Whereupon we ask if it is the freedom of his opinions which is fascinating. His friends answer, that there is no more indomitable partisan of order. He is called the Hercules of Toryism. From infancy he detested the Whigs, and he never spoke of them but as public malefactors. He insults them even in his *Dictionary*. He exalts Charles the Second and James the Second as two of the best kings who have ever reigned.[5] He justifies the arbitrary taxes which Government presumes to levy on the Americans.[6] He declares that 'Whiggism is a negation of all principle;'[7] that 'the first Whig was the devil;'[8] that 'the Crown has not power enough;'[9] that 'mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination.'[10] Frenchmen of the present time, the admirers of the *Contrat Social*, soon feel, on reading or hearing all this, that they are no longer in France. And what must they feel when, a few moments later, the Doctor says:

'I think him (Rousseau) one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. . . . I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.'[11] . . .

It seems that in England people do not like philosophical innovators.

[1] *Life of Johnson*, ch. xvii. 159.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. v. 28

[3] He had formerly put in his *Dictionary* the following definition of the word pension: '*Pension*—an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country.' This drew of course afterwards all the sarcasms of his adversaries upon himself.

[4] Boswell's *Life*, ch. xxiv, 216.

[5] *Ibid.* ch. xlix 444.

[6] *Ibid.* ch. xlviii. 435.

[7] *Ibid.* ch. xvi. 148.

[8] *Ibid.* ch. lxvi. 606.

[9] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.

[10] *Ibid.* ch. xxvii. 252.

[11] *Ibid.* ch. xix. 175.

Let us see if Voltaire will be spared: 'It is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them (Rousseau and Voltaire).'[1] In good sooth, this is clear. But can we not look for truth outside an Established Church? No; 'no honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity.'[2] Here is a peremptory Christian; there are scarcely any in France so decisive. Moreover, he is an Anglican, with a passion for the hierarchy, an admirer of established order, hostile to the Dissenters. You will see him bow to an archbishop with peculiar veneration.[3] You will hear him reprove one of his friends 'for saying grace without mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'[4] If you speak to him of a Quakers' meeting, and of a woman preaching, he will tell you that 'a woman preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs; it is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.'[5] He is a Conservative, and does not fear being considered antiquated. He went at one o'clock in the morning into the Church of St. John, Clerkenwell, to interrogate a tormented spirit, which had promised to 'give a token of her presence there by a knock upon her coffin.'[6] If you look at Boswell's Life of him, you will find there fervent prayers, examinations of conscience, and rules of conduct. Amidst prejudices and follies he has a deep conviction, active faith, severe morality. He is a Christian from his heart and conscience, reason and practice. The thought of God, the fear of the last judgment, engross and reform him. He said one day to Garrick: 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David, for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.' He reproaches himself with his indolence, implores God's pardon, is humble, has scruples. All this is very strange. We ask men what can please them in this grumbling bear, with the manners of a beadle and the inclinations of a constable? They answer, that in London people are less exacting than in Paris, as to manners and politeness; that in England they allow energy to be rude and virtue odd; that they put up with a combative conversation; that public opinion is all on the side of the constitution and Christianity; and that society was right to take for its master a man who, by its style and precepts, best suited its bent.

We now send for his books, and after an hour we observe, that whatever the work be, tragedy or dictionary, biography or essay, he always keeps the same tone. 'Dr. Johnson,' Goldsmith said one day to him, 'if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales.'[7] In fact, his phraseology rolls always in solemn and majestic periods, in which every substantive marches ceremoniously, accom-

[1] Boswell's *Life*, ch. xix. 176.
[2] *Ibid.* ch. xix. 174.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. lxxv. 723.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxiv. 218.
[5] *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 157.
[6] *Ibid.* ch. xv. 138, note 3.
Ibid. ch. xxviii. 256.

panied by its epithet; great, pompous words peal like an organ; every proposition is set forth balanced by a proposition of equal length; thought is developed with the compassed regularity and official splendour of a procession. Classical prose attains its perfection in him, as classical poetry in Pope. Art cannot be more consummate, or nature more forced. No one has confined ideas in more strait compartments; none has given stronger relief to dissertation and proof; none has imposed more despotically on story and dialogue the forms of argumentation and violent declamation; none has more generally mutilated the flowing liberty of conversation and life by antitheses and technical words. It is the completion and the excess, the triumph and the tyranny, of oratorical style.[1] We understand now that an oratorical age would recognise him as a master, and attribute to him in eloquence the primacy which it attributed to Pope in verse.

We wish to know what ideas have made him popular. Here the astonishment of a Frenchman redoubles. We vainly turn over the pages of his *Dictionary*, his eight volumes of essays, his ten volumes of biographies, his numberless articles, his conversation so carefully collected; we yawn. His truths are too true; we already knew his precepts by heart. We learn from him that life is short, and we ought to improve the few moments accorded to us;[2] that a mother ought not to bring up her son as a dandy; that a man ought to repent of his crimes, and yet avoid superstition; that in everything we ought to be active, and not hurried. We thank him for these sage counsels, but we mutter to ourselves that we could have done very well without them. We should like to know who could have been the lovers of *ennui* who have bought up thirteen thousand copies. We then remember that sermons are liked in England, and that these *Essays* are sermons. We discover that men of reflection do not need bold or striking ideas, but palpable and profitable truths. They demand to be furnished with a useful provision of authentic documents on man and his existence, and demand nothing more. No matter if the idea is vulgar; meat and bread are vulgar too, and are no less good. They wish to be taught the kinds and degrees of happiness and unhappiness, the varieties and results of characters and conditions, the advantages and inconveniences

[1] Here is a celebrated phrase, which will give some idea of his style (Boswell's *Journal*, ch. xliii. 381): 'We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. . . . Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.

[2] *Rambler*, 108, 109, 110, 111.

of town and country, knowledge and ignorance, wealth and poverty because they are moralists and utilitarians; because they look in a book for the knowledge to turn them from folly, and motives to confirm them in uprightness; because they cultivate in themselves sense, that is to say, practical reason. A little fiction, a few portraits, the least amount of amusement, will suffice to adorn it. This substantial food only needs a very simple seasoning. It is not the novelty of the dishes, nor dainty cookery, but solidity and wholesomeness, which they seek. For this reason the *Essays* are a national food. It is because they are insipid and dull for us that they suit the taste of an Englishman. We understand now why they take for a favourite the respectable, the unbearable Samuel Johnson.

I would fain bring together all these features, see these figures; only colours and forms complete an idea; to know, we must see. Let us go to the print-room. Hogarth, the national painter, the friend of Fielding, the contemporary of Johnson, the exact imitator of manners, will show us the externals, as these authors have shown us the internals.

We enter these great archives of art. Painting is a noble thing! It embellishes all, even vice. On the four walls, under transparent and brilliant glass, the torsos rise, flesh palpitates, the blood's warm dew circulates under the veined skin, speaking likenesses stand out in the light; it seems that the ugly, the vulgar, the odious, have disappeared from the world. I no more criticise characters; I have done with moral rules. I am no longer tempted to approve or to hate. A man here is but a smudge of colour, at most a handful of muscles; I know no longer if he be a murderer.

Life, the happy, complete, overflowing display, the expansion of natural and corporal powers; this from all sides floods and rejoices our eyes. Our limbs instinctively move by contagious imitation of movements and forms. Before these lions of Rubens, whose deep growls rise like thunder to the mouth of the cave, before these colossal contorting torsos, these snouts which grope about skulls, the animal in us quivers through sympathy, and it seems as if we were about to emit from our chests a roar to equal their own.

What though art has degenerated, even amongst Frenchmen, epigrammatists, the bepowdered abbés of the eighteenth century, it is art still. Beauty is gone, gracefulness remains. These pretty arch faces, these slender waspish waists, these delicate arms buried in a nest of lace, these careless wanderings amongst thickets and warbling fountains, these gallant dreams in a lofty chamber festooned with garlands, all this refined and coquettish society is still charming. The artist, then as always, gathers the flower of things, recks not of the rest.

But Hogarth, what did he mean? who ever saw such a painter? Is he a painter? Others make us wish to see what they represent; he makes us wish not to see it.

Nothing can be more agreeable to paint than a drunken debauch

by night; the jolly, careless faces; the rich light, drowned in shadows which flicker over rumpled garments and weighed-down bodies. With Hogarth, on the other hand, what figures! Wickedness, stupidity, all the vile poison of the vilest human passions, drops and distils from them. One is shaking on his legs as he stands, sick, whilst a hiccup half opens his belching lips; another howls hoarsely, like a wretched cur; another, with bald and broken head, patched up in places, falls forward on his chest, with the smile of a sick idiot. We turn over the leaves of Hogarth's works, and the train of odious or beastly faces appears to be inexhaustible; features distorted or deformed, foreheads lumpy or puffed out with perspiring flesh, hideous grins distended by ferocious laughter: one has had his nose bitten off; the next, one-eyed, square-headed, spotted over with bleeding warts, whose red face looks redder under the white wig, smokes silently, full of rancour and spleen; another, an old man with a crutch, scarlet and puffed, his chin falling on his breast, gazes with the fixed and starting eyes of a crab. Hogarth shows the beast in man, and worse, the mad and murderous, the feeble or enraged beast. Look at this murderer standing over the body of his butchered mistress, with squinting eyes, distorted mouth, grinding his teeth at the thought of the blood which stains and denounces him; or this ruined gambler, who has torn off his wig and kerchief, and is crying on his knees, with closed teeth, and fist raised against heaven. Look again at this madhouse: the dirty idiot, with muddy face, filthy hair, stained claws, who thinks he is playing on the violin, and has a sheet of music for a cap; the religious madman, who writhes convulsively on his straw, with clasped hands, feeling the claws of the devil in his bowels; the naked and haggard raving lunatic whom they are chaining up, and who is tearing out his flesh with his nails. Detestable Yahoos that you are, who presume to usurp the blessed light, in what brain can you have arisen, and why did a painter sully his eyes with the sight of you?

It is because his eyes were English, and the senses are barbarous. Let us leave our repugnance behind us, and look at things as Englishmen do, not from without, but from within. The whole current of public thought tends here toward observation of the soul, and painting is dragged along with literature in the same course. Forget then the forms, they are but lines; the body is here only to translate the mind.[1] This twisted nose, these pimples on a vinous cheek, these stupefied gestures of a drowsy brute, these wrinkled features, these degraded forms, only make the character, the trade, the whim, the habit stand out clear. The artist shows us no longer limbs and heads, but debauchery, drunkenness, brutality, hatred, despair, all the disease

[1] When a character is strongly marked in the living face, it may be considered as an index to the mind, to express which with any degree of justness in painting requires the utmost efforts of a great master.—*Analysis of Beauty*.

and deformities of these too harsh and hard wills, the mad menagerie of all the passions. Not that he lets them loose; this rude, dogmatic, and Christian citizen handles more vigorously than any of his brethren the heavy club of morality. He is a beef-eating policeman charged with instructing and correcting drunken pugilists. From such a man to such men ceremony is superfluous. At the bottom of every cage where he imprisons a vice, he writes its name and adds the condemnation pronounced by Scripture; he displays that vice in its ugliness, buries it in its filth, drags it to its punishment, so that there is no conscience so perverted as not to recognize it, none so hardened as not to be horrified at it.

Look well, these are lessons which have force. This one is against gin; on a step, in the open street, lies a drunken woman, half naked, with hanging breasts, scrofulous legs; she smiles idiotically, and her child, which she lets fall on the pavement, breaks its skull. Beneath, a pale skeleton, with closed eyes, sinks down with her glass in her hand. Round about, dissipation and frenzy drive the tattered spectres one against another. A wretch who has hung himself sways to and fro in a garret. Gravediggers are putting a naked woman into a coffin. A starveling is gnawing side by side with a dog, a bone destitute of meat. By his side a young woman is making her suckling swallow gin. A madman pitchforks his child, and raises it aloft; he dances and laughs, and the mother sees it.

Another picture and lesson, this time against cruelty. A young murderer has been hung, and is being dissected. He is there, on a table, and the lecturer calmly points out with his wand the places where the students are to work. At this sign the dissectors cut the flesh and pull. One is at the feet; the second man of science, a sardonic old butcher, seizes a knife with a hand that looks as if it would do its duty, and thrusts the other hand into the entrails, which, lower down, are being taken out to be put in a bucket. The last medical student takes out the eye, and the distorted mouth seems to howl under his hand. Meanwhile a dog seizes the heart, which is draggling on the ground; thigh-bones and skull boil by way of concert, in a copper; and the doctors around cooly exchange surgical jokes on the subject which, piecemeal, is passing away under their scalpels.

Frenchmen will say that such lessons are good for barbarians, and that they only half-like these official or lay preachers, De Foe, Hogarth, Smollett, Richardson, Johnson, and the rest. I reply that moralists are useful, and that these have changed a state of barbarism into one of civilization.

CHAPTER VII.

The Poets.

I. Rule and realm of the classical spirit—Its characters, works, scope, and limits—How it is centred in Pope.

II. Pope—Education—Precocity—Beginnings—Pastoral poems—*Essay on Criticism*—Personal appearance—Mode of life—Character—Mediocrity of his passions and ideas—Largeness of his vanity and talent—Independent fortune and assiduous labour.

III. Epistle of *Eloisa to Abelard*—What the passions become in artificial poetry—*The Rape of the Lock*—Society and the language of society in France and England—Wherein Pope's badinage is painful and displeasing—*The Dunciad*—Obscenity and vulgarities—Wherein the English imagination and drawing-room wit are irreconcilable.

IV. Descriptive talent—Oratorical talent—Didactic poems—Why these poems are the final work of the classical spirit—The *Essay on Man*—His deism and optimism—Value of his conceptions—How they are connected with the dominant style—How they are deformed in Pope's hands—Methods and perfection of his style—Excellence of his portraits—Why they are superior—Translation of the *Iliad*—Change of taste during the past century.

V. Incommensurability of the English mind and the classical decorum—Prior—Gay—Ancient pastoral impossible in northern climates—Moral conception natural in England—Thomson.

VI. Discredit of the drawing-room—Entrance of the man of sensations—Why the return to nature is more precocious in England than in France—Sterne—Richardson—Mackenzie—Macpherson—Gray, Akenside, Beattie, Collins, Young, Shenstone—Persistence of the classical form—Domination of the period—Johnson—The historical school—Robertson, Gibbon, Hume—Their talent and their limits—Beginning of the modern age.

I.

WHEN we take in in one view the vast literary region in England, extending from the restoration of the Stuarts to the French Revolution, we perceive that all the productions, independently of the English character, bear a classical impress, and that this impress, special to this region, is met with neither in the preceding nor in the succeeding time. This dominant form of thought is imposed on all writers from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume: there is an art to which they all aspire; the work of a hundred years, practice and theory, inventions and imitations, examples and criticism, are employed in attaining it. They comprehend only one kind of beauty; they estab-

lish only the precepts which may produce it; they re-write, translate, and disfigure on its pattern the great works of other ages; they carry it into all the different kinds of literature, and succeed or fail in them according as it is adapted to them or not. The sway of this style is so absolute, that it is imposed on the greatest, and condemns them to impotence when they would apply it beyond its domain. The possession of this style is so universal, that it is met with in the weakest, and raises them to the height of talent, when they apply it in its domain.[1] This it is which brings to perfection prose, discourse, essay, dissertation, narration, and all the productions which form part of conversation and eloquence. This it is which destroyed the old drama, debased the new, impoverished and diverted poetry, produced a correct, agreeable, sensible, colourless, and concise history. This spirit, common to England and France, impressed its form on the infinite diversity of literary works, so that in its universal manifest ascendency we cannot but recognise the presence of one of those internal forces which bend and govern the course of human genius.

In no branch was it displayed more manifestly than in poetry, and at no time did it appear more clearly than under Queen Anne. The poets have just attained to the art which they had discerned. For sixty years they were approaching it; now they possess it, handle it; already they employ and exaggerate it. The style is at the same time finished and artificial. Open the first that comes to hand, Parnell or Philips, Addison or Prior, Gay or Tickell, you find a certain turn of mind, versification, language. Pass to a second, the same form reappears; you would say that they were imitations one of another. Go on to a third; the same diction, the same apostrophes, the same fashion of arranging an epithet and rounding a period. Turn over the whole lot; with little individual differences, they seem to be all cast in the same mould; one is more epicurean, another more moral, another more biting; but the noble language, the oratorical pomp, the classical correctness, reign throughout; the substantive is accompanied by its adjective, its knight of honour; antithesis balances the symmetrical architecture; the verb, as in Lucan or Statius, is displayed, flanked on each side by a noun decorated by an epithet; one would say that the verse had been fabricated by a machine, so uniform is the make; we forget what it means; we are tempted to count the feet on our fingers; we know beforehand what poetical ornaments are to embellish it. There is a theatrical dressing, contrasts, allusions, mythological elegances, Greek or Latin quotations. There is a scholastic solidity, sententious maxims, philosophic commonplaces, moral developments, oratorical exactness. You might imagine yourself to be before a family of plants; if the size, colour, accessories, names differ, the

[1] P. L. Courier (1772–1825) says, 'a lady's maid, under Louis XIV., wrote better than the greatest of modern writers.'

fundamental type does not vary; the stamens are of the same number, similarly inserted, around similar pistils, above leaves arranged on the same plan; he who knows one knows all; there is a common organism and structure which involves the uniformity of the rest. If you review the whole family, you will doubtless find there some characteristic plant which displays the type in a clear light, whilst next to it and by degrees it alters, degenerates, and at last loses itself in the surrounding families. So here we see classical art find its centre in the neighbours of Pope, and above all in Pope; then, after being half effaced, mingle with foreign elements, until it disappears in the poetry which succeeded it.[1]

II.

In 1688, at the house of a linen draper in Lombard Street, London was born a little, delicate, and sickly creature, by nature artificial, constituted beforehand for a studious existence, having no taste but for books, who from his early youth derived his whole pleasure from the contemplation of printed books. He copied the letters, and thus learned to write. He passed his infancy with them, and was a verse-maker as soon as he knew how to speak. At the age of twelve he had written a little tragedy out of the *Iliad*, and an *Ode on Solitude*. From thirteen to fifteen he composed a long epic of four thousand verses, called *Alexander*. For eight years shut up in a little house in Windsor Forest, he read all the best critics, almost all the English, Latin, and French poets who have a reputation, Homer, the Greek poets, and a few of the greater ones in the original, Tasso and Ariosto in translations, with such assiduity, that he nearly died from it. He did not search in them for passions, but style: there was never a more devoted adorer, never a more precocious master of form. Already his taste showed itself: amongst all the English poets his favourite was Dryden, the least inspired and the most classical. He perceived his career. He states that Mr. Walsh told him there was one way left of

[1] The Rev. Whitwell Elwin, in his second volume of the *Works of Alexander Pope*, at the end of his introduction to *An Essay on Man*, says, p. 338: 'M. Taine asserts that from the Restoration to the French Revolution, from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume, all our literature, both prose and verse, bears the impress of classic art. The mode, he says, culminated in the reign of Queen Anne, and Pope, he considers, was the extreme example of it. . . . Many of the most eminent authors who flourished between the English Restoration wrote in a style far removed from that which M. Taine calls classical. . . . The verse differs like the prose, though in a less degree, and is not "of a uniform make, as if fabricated by a machine." . . . Neither is the substance of the prose and verse, from the Restoration to the French Revolution, an invariable common-sense mediocrity. . . . There is much truth in his (M. Taine's) view, that there was a growing tendency to cultivate style, and in some writers the art degenerated into the artificial.'—TR.

excelling. 'We had several great poets,' he said, 'but we never had one great poet that was correct; and he advised me to make that my study and aim.'[1] He followed this advice, tried his hand in translations of Ovid and Statius, and in recasting parts of old Chaucer. He appropriated all the poetic elegances and excellencies, stored them up in his memory; he arranged in his head the complete dictionary of all happy epithets, all ingenious turns of expression, all sonorous rhythms by which one may exalt, render precise, illuminate an idea. He was like those little musicians, infant prodigies, who, brought up at the piano, suddenly acquire a marvellous touch, roll out scales, brilliant shakes, make the octaves vault with an agility and justice which drive off the stage the most famous artists. At seventeen, becoming acquainted with old Wycherley, who was sixty-nine, he undertook, at his request, to correct his poems, and corrected them so well, that the other was at once charmed and mortified. Pope blotted out, added, recast, spoke frankly, and eliminated firmly. The author, in spite of himself, admired the corrections secretly, and tried openly to make light of them, until at last his vanity, wounded at owing so much to so young a man, and at finding a master in a scholar, ended by breaking off an intercourse by which he profited and suffered too much. For the scholar had at his first step carried the art beyond his master's. At sixteen[2] his Pastorals bore witness to a correctness which no one had possessed, not even Dryden. To read these choice words, these exquisite arrangements of melodious syllables, this science of division and rejection, this style so fluent and pure, these graceful images rendered still more graceful by the diction, and all this artificial and many-tinted garland of flowers which he called pastoral, people thought of the first eclogues of Virgil. Mr. Walsh declared 'that it is not flattery at all to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age.'[3] When later they appeared in one volume, the public was dazzled. 'You have only displeased the critics,' wrote Wycherley, 'by pleasing them too well.'[4] The same year the poet of twenty-one finished his *Essay on Criticism*, a sort of *Ars Poetica:* it is the kind of poem a man might write at the end of his career, when he has handled all modes of writing, and has grown grey in criticism; and in this subject, whose treatment demands the experience of a whole literary life, he was in an instant as ripe as Boileau.

This consummate musician, who begins by a treatise on harmony, what will he make of his incomparable mechanism and his professional science? It is well to feel and think before writing; a full source of

[1] R. Carruthers, *Life of Alexander Pope*, 2d ed. 1857, ch. i. 33.

[2] It is very doubtful whether Pope was not older than sixteen when he wrote the pastorals. See, on this subject, Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, London, 1871, i 239 *et passim*.—Tr.

[3] Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, i. 233.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 242.

living ideas and candid passions is necessary to make a genuine poet, and in him, seen closely, we find that everything, to his very person, is tricked out and artificial; he was a dwarf, four feet high, contorted, hunchbacked, thin, valetudinarian, appearing, when he arrived at maturity, no longer capable of existing. He could not get up himself, a woman dressed him; he wore three pairs of stockings, drawn on one over the other, so slender were his legs; 'when he rose, he was invested in bodice made of stiff canvas, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat;'[1] next came a sort of fur doublet, for the least thing made him shiver; and lastly, a thick linen shirt, very warm, with fine sleeves. Over all this he wore a black garment, a tye-wig, a little sword; thus equipped, he went and took his place at the table of his great friend, Lord Oxford. He was so small, that he had to be raised on a chair of his own; so bald, that when he had no company he covered his head with a velvet cap; so punctilious and exacting, that the footmen avoided to go his errands, and the Earl had to discharge several 'for their resolute refusal of his messages.' At dinner he ate too much; like a spoiled child, he would have highly seasoned dishes, and thus 'would oppress his stomach with repletion.' When cordials were offered him, he got angry, but did not refuse them. He had all the appetite and whims of an old child, an old invalid, an old author, an old bachelor. You are prepared to find him whimsical and susceptible. He often, without saying a word, and without any known cause, quitted the house of the Earl of Oxford, and the ladies had to go repeatedly with messages to bring him back. If Lady Mary Wortley, his former poetical divinity, were unfortunately at table, there was no dining in peace; they would not fail to contradict, peck at each other, quarrel; and one or other would leave the room. He would be sent for and would return, but he brought his hobbies back with him. He was crafty, malignant, like a nervous abortion as he was; when he wanted anything, he dared not ask for it plainly; with hints and contrivances of speech he induced people to mention it, to bring it forward, after which he would make use of it. 'Thus he teased Lord Orrery till he obtained a screen. He hardly drank tea without a stratagem. Lady Bolingbroke used to say that "he played the politician about cabbages and turnips."'[2]

The rest of his life is not much more noble. He wrote libels on the Duke of Chandos, Aaron Hill, Lady Mary Wortley, and then lied or equivocated to disavow them. He had an ugly liking for artifice, and prepared a disloyal trick against Lord Bolingbroke, his greatest friend. He was never frank, always acting a part; he aped the *blase* man, the impartial great artist, a contemner of the great, of kings, of poetry itself. The truth is, that he thought of nothing but his phrases,

[1] Johnson, *Lives of the most Eminent English Poets*, 3 vols., ed. Cunningham, 1854; A. Pope, iii. 96.

[2] *Ibid* iii. 99.

his author's reputation, and 'a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy.'[1] When you read his correspondence, you find that there are not more than about ten genuine letters; he is a literary man even in the moments when he opened his heart; his confidences are formal rhetoric; and when he conversed with a friend he was always thinking of the printer, who would give his effusions to the public. Through his very pretentiousness he grew awkward, and unmasked himself. One day Richardson and his father, the painter, found him reading a pamphlet that Cibber had written against him. 'These things,' said Pope, 'are my diversion.' 'They sat by him while he perused it, and saw his features writhing with anguish; and young Richardson said to his father, when they returned, that he hoped to be preserved from such diversion.'[2] In fine, his great cause for writing was literary vanity; he wished to be admired, and nothing more; his life was that of a coquette studying herself in a glass, bedecking herself, smirking, paying compliments to herself, yet declaring that compliments weary her, that painting the face makes her dirty, and that she has a horror of affectation. Pope has no dash, no naturalness or manliness; no more ideas than passions; at least such ideas as a man feels it necessary to write, and in connection with which we lose thought of words. Religious controversy and party quarrels resound about him; he studiously avoids them; amidst all these shocks his chief care is to preserve his writing-desk; he is a very lukewarm Catholic, all but a deist, not well aware of what deism means; and on this point he borrows from Bolingbroke ideas whose scope he cannot see, but which he thinks suitable to be put into verse. In a letter to Atterbury (1717) he says:

'In my politics, I think no further than how to prefer the peace of my life, in any government under which I live; nor in my religion, than to preserve the peace of my conscience in any church with which I communicate. I hope all churches and governments are so far of God, as they are rightly understood and rightly administered; and where they err, or may be wrong, I leave it to God alone to mend or reform them.'[3]

Such convictions do not torment a man. In reality, he did not write because he thought, but thought in order to write; inky paper, and the noise it makes in the world, was his idol; if he wrote verses, it was merely for the sake of doing so.

This is the best training for versification. Pope gave himself up to it; he was a man of leisure, his father had left him a very fair fortune; he earned a large sum by translating the *Iliad* and *Odyssey;* he had an income of eight hundred pounds. He was never in the pay of a publisher; he looked from an eminence upon the beggarly authors grovelling in their Bohemianism, and, calmly seated in his pretty house at Twickenham, in his grotto, or in the fine garden which he had himself

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ch. lxxi. 670.

[2] Carruther's *Life of Pope*, ch. x. 377.

[3] *Ibid* ch. iv 164.

planned, he could polish and file his writings as long as he chose. He did not fail to do so. When he had written a work, he kept it at least two years in his desk. From time to time he re-read and corrected it; took counsel of his friends, then of his enemies; no new edition was unamended; he moulded without wearying. His first production was so much recast and transformed, that it could not be recognised in the final copy. The pieces which seem least retouched are two satires, and Dodsley says that in the manuscript 'almost every line was written twice over; I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent some time afterwards to me for the press, with almost every line written twice over a second time.'[1] Dr. Johnson says: 'From his attention to poetry he was never diverted. If conversation offered anything that could be improved, he committed it to paper; if a thought, or perhaps an expression, more happy than was common, rose to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich was preserved for an opportunity of insertion; and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time.'[2] His writing-box had to be placed upon his bed before he rose. 'Lord Oxford's domestic related that, in the dreadful winter of 1740, she was called from her bed by him four times in one night to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought.'[3] Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation, because he 'had always some poetical scheme in his head.' Thus nothing was lacking for the attainment of perfect expression; the practice of a lifetime, the study of every model, independent fortune, the company of men of the world, freedom from turbulent passions, the absence of dominant ideas, the facility of an infant prodigy, the assiduity of an old man of letters. It seems as though he were expressly endowed with faults and good qualities, here enriched, there impoverished, at once narrowed and developed, to set in relief the classical form by the diminution of the classical depth, to present the public with a model of a well-used and accomplished art, to reduce to a brilliant and rigid crystal the flowing sap of an expiring literature.

III.

It is a great misfortune for a poet to know his business too well; his poetry then shows a man of business, and not the poet. I wish I could admire Pope's works of imagination, but I cannot. In vain I read the testimony of his contemporaries, and even that of the moderns, and repeat to myself that in his time he was the prince of poets; that his Epistle from *Eloisa to Abelard* was received with a cry of enthusiasm; that one could not then imagine a finer expression of true poetry; that to this day it is learned by heart, like the speech of Hippolyte in the *Phèdre* of Racine; that Johnson, that great literary critic, ranked it

[1] Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets;* Alexander Pope, iii. 114.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 111.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 105.

amongst 'the happiest productions of the human mind;' that Lord Byron himself preferred it to the celebrated ode of Sappho. I read it again, and am bored: this is not as it ought to be; but, in spite of myself, I yawn, and I open the original letters of Eloisa to find the cause of my weariness.

Doubtless poor Eloisa is a barbarian, nay worse, a literary barbarian; she makes learned quotations, arguments, tries to imitate Cicero, to arrange her periods; she could not do otherwise, writing a dead language, with an acquired style; perhaps the reader would do as much if he were obliged to write to his mistress in Latin.[1] But how the true sentiment pierces through the scholastic form!

'Thou art the only one who can sadden me, console me, make me joyful. . . . I should be happier and prouder to be called thy mistress than to be the lawful wife of an emperor. . . . Never, God knows it, have I wished for anything else in thee but thee. It is thee alone whom I desire; nothing that thou couldst give; it is not a marriage, a dowry: I never dreamt of doing my pleasure or my will, thou knowest it, but thine.'

Then come passionate words, genuine love words,[2] then the candid words of a penitent, who says and dares everything, because she wishes to be cured, to show her wound to her confessor, even her most shameful wound; perhaps also because in extreme agony, as in childbirth, modesty vanishes. All this is very crude, very rude; Pope has more wit than she, and how he endues her with it! In his hands she becomes an academician, and her letter is a repertory of literary effects. Portraits and descriptions; she paints to Abelard the nunnery and the landscape:

'In these lone walls (their days eternal bound),
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crowned,
Where awful arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light. . . .
The wandering streams that shine between the hills,
The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze.'[3]

Declamation and commonplace: she sends Abelard discourses on love and the liberty which it demands, on the cloister and the peaceful life

[1] Rev. W. Elwin, in his edition of Pope's Works, ii. 224, says: 'The authenticity of the Latin letters has usually been taken for granted, but I have a strong belief that they are a forgery. . . . It is far more likely that they are the fabrication of an unconcerned romancer, who speaks in the name of others with a latitude which people, not entirely degraded, would never adopt towards themselves. The suspicion is strengthened when the second party to the correspondence, the chief philosopher of his generation, exhibits the same exceptional depravity of taste.'—Tr.

[2] 'Vale, unice.'

[3] Pope's Works, ed. Elwin; *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 245, *v.* 141–160

which it affords, on writing and the advantages of the post.[1] Antitheses and contrasts, she forwards them to Abelard by the dozen; a contrast between the convent illuminated by his presence and desolate by his absence, between the tranquillity of the pure nun and the anxiety of the culpable nun, between the dream of human happiness and the dream of divine happiness. In fine, it is a *bravura*, with contrasts of *forte* and *piano*, variations and change of key. Eloisa makes the most of her theme, and sets herself to crowd into it all the powers and effects of her voice. Admire the *crescendo*, the shakes by which she ends her brilliant *morceaux;* to transport the hearer at the close of the portrait of the innocent nun, she says:

'How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot:
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
"Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;"
Desires composed, affections ever even;
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
Grace shines around her, with serenest beams,
And whisp'ring angels prompt her golden dreams.
For her, th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes,
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day.'[2]

Observe the noise of the big drum, I mean the grand contrivances, for so may be called all that a person says who wishes to rave and cannot; for instance, speaking to rocks and walls, praying the absent Abelard to come, fancying him present, apostrophising grace and virtue:

'Oh grace serene! Oh virtue heavenly fair!
Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care!
Fresh-blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky!
And faith, our early immortality!
Enter, each mild, each amicable guest;
Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest!'[3]

[1] *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 240, *v.* 51–58:

Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banished lover, or some captive maid:
They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,
The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.'

[2] *Ibid.* 249, *v.* 207–222.

[3] *Ibid.* 254, *v.* 297–302.

Hearing the dead speaking to her, telling the angels:

> 'I come! I come! Prepare your roseate bow'rs,
> Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs.'[1]

This is the final symphony with modulations of the celestial organ. I suppose that Abelard cries 'Bravo' when he hears it.

But this is nothing in comparison with the art exhibited by her in every phrase. She puts ornaments into every line. Imagine an Italian singer trilling every word. O what pretty sounds! how nimbly and brilliantly they roll along, how clear, and always exquisite! it is impossible to reproduce them in another tongue. Now it is a happy image, filling up a whole phrase; now a series of verses, full of symmetrical contrasts; two ordinary words set in relief by strange conjunction; an imitative rhythm completing the impression of the mind by the emotion of the senses; the most elegant comparisons and the most picturesque epithets; the closest style and the most ornate. Except truth, nothing is wanting. Eloisa is worse than a singer, she is an author: we look at the back of her epistle to Abelard to see if she has not written 'For Press.'

Pope has somewhere given a receipt for making an epic poem: take a storm, a dream, five or six battles, three sacrifices, funereal games, a dozen gods in two divisions; shake together until there rises the froth of a lofty style. You have just seen the receipt for making a love-letter. This kind of poetry resembles cookery; neither heart nor genius is necessary to produce it, but a light hand, an attentive eye, and a cultivated taste.

It seems that this kind of talent is made for light verses. It is factitious, and so are the manners of society. To make pretty speeches, to prattle with ladies, to speak elegantly of their chocolate or their fan, to jeer at fools, to criticise the last tragedy, to be good at compliments or epigrams,—this, it seems, is the natural employment of a mind such as this, but slightly impassioned, very vain, a perfect master of style, as careful of his verses as a dandy of his coat. Pope wrote the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad;* his contemporaries went into ecstasies on the charm of his badinage and the exactness of his raillery, and believed that he had surpassed Boileau's *Lutrin* and *Satires.*

That may well be; at all events the praise would be scanty. In Boileau there are, as a rule, two kinds of verse, as was said by a man of wit;[2] most of which seem to be those of a sharp schoolboy in the third class, the rest those of a good schoolboy in the upper division. Boileau wrote the second verse before the first; this is why once out of four times his first verse only serves to stop a gap. Doubtless Pope had a more brilliant and adroit mechanism; but this facility of hand does not suffice to make a poet, even a poet of the boudoir. There, as elsewhere, we need genuine passions, or at least genuine tastes. When we wish to

[1] *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 255, *v.* 317.

[2] M. Guillaume Guizot.

paint the pretty nothings of conversation and the world, we must like them. We can only paint well what we love.[1] Is there no charming grace in the prattle and frivolity of a pretty woman? Painters, like Watteau, have spent their lives in feasting on them. A lock of hair which is lifted up, a pretty arm peeping from underneath a great deal of lace, a stooping figure making the bright folds of a petticoat sparkle, and the arch, half-engaging, half-mocking smile of the pouting mouth,—these are enough to transport an artist. Certainly he will be aware of the influence of the toilet, as much so as the lady herself, and will never scold her for passing three hours at her glass; there is poetry in elegance. He enjoys it as a picture; enjoys the refinements of worldly life, the long quiet lines of the lofty, wainscoted drawing-room, the soft reflection of the high mirrors and glittering porcelain, the careless gaiety of the little sculptured Loves, locked in embrace above the mantelpiece, the silvery sound of these soft voices, buzzing scandal round the tea-table. Pope hardly, if at all, rejoices in them; he is satirical and English amidst this amiable luxury, introduced from France. Although he is the most worldly of English poets, he is not enough so; nor is the society around him. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who was in her time 'the pink of fashion,' and who is compared to Madame de Sévigné, has such a serious mind, such a decided style, such a precise judgment, and such a harsh sarcasm, that you would take her for a man. In fine, the English, even Lord Chesterfield and Horace Walpole, never mastered the true tone of the *salon*. Pope is like them; his voice thunders, and then suddenly becomes biting. Every instant a harsh mockery blots out the graceful images, which he began to arouse. Consider *The Rape of the Lock* as a whole; it is a buffoonery in a noble style. Lord Petre had cut off a lock of hair of a fashionable beauty, Mrs. Arabella Fermor; out of this trifle the problem is to make an epic, with invocations, apostrophes, the intervention of supernatural beings, and the rest of poetic mechanism; the solemnity of style contrasts with the littleness of the events; we laugh at these bickerings as at an insect's quarrel. Such has always been the case in this country; whenever Englishmen wish to represent social life, it is with an external and assumed politeness; at the bottom of their admiration there is scorn. Their insipid compliments conceal a mental reservation; observe them well, and you will see that they look upon a pretty, well-dressed, and coquettish woman as a pink doll, fit to amuse people for half an hour, by her outward show. Pope dedicates his poem to Mistress Arabella Fermor with every kind of compliment. The truth is, he is not polite; a Frenchwoman would have sent him back his book, and advised him to learn manners; for one commendation of her beauty she would find ten sarcasms upon her frivolity. Is it very pleasant to have it said to

[1] Goethe sings—'Liebe sei vor allen Dingen,
Unser Thema, wenn wir singen.'

one: 'You have the prettiest eyes in the world, but you live in the pursuit of trifles?' Yet to this all his homage is reduced.[1] His complimentary emphasis, his declaration that the 'ravish'd hair . . . adds new glory to the shining sphere,'[2] all his stock of phrases is but a parade of gallantry which betrays indelicacy and grossness. Will she

> 'Stain her honour, or her new brocade,
> Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade,
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball?'[3]

No Frenchman of the eighteenth century would have imagined such a compliment. At most, that bearish Rousseau, that former lackey and Geneva moralist, might have delivered this disagreeable thrust. In England it was not found too rude. Mrs. Arabella Fermor was so pleased with the poem, that she gave about copies of it. Clearly she was not hard to please, for she had heard much worse compliments. If you read in Swift the literal transcript of a fashionable conversation, you will see that a woman of fashion of that time could endure much before she was angry.

But the strangest thing is, that this badinage is, for Frenchmen at least, no badinage at all. It is not all like lightness or gaiety. Dorat, Gresset, would have been stupefied and shocked by it. We remain cold under its most brilliant hits. Now and then at most a crack of the whip arouses us, but not to laughter. These caricatures seem strange to us, but do not amuse. The wit is no wit; all is calculated, combined, artificially prepared; we expect flashes of lightning, but at the last moment they do not descend. Thus Lord Petre, to 'implore propitious heaven, and every power,'

> 'To Love an altar built
> Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
> There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
> And all the trophies of his former loves;
> With tender billets-doux he lights the pyre,
> And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.'[4]

We remain disappointed, not seeing the comicality of the description. We go on conscientiously, and in the picture of Melancholy and her palace find figures very strange after another fashion:

> 'Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pye talks;
> Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works,
> And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.'[5]

We tell ourselves now that we are in China; that so far from Paris

[1] See his *Epistle of the Characters of Women*. According to Pope, this character is composed of love of pleasure and love of power.

[2] *Rape of the Lock*, c. v. 181, *v.* 141. *Ibid.* c. ii. 156, *v.* 107.

[4] *Ibid.* c. ii. 153, *v.* 37–42. [5] *Ibid.* c. iv. 169, *v.* 52

and Voltaire we must be surprised at nothing, that these folk have ears different from ours, and that a Pekin mandarin vastly relishes a concert of kettles. Finally, we comprehend that, even in this correct age and this artificial poetry, the old imagination exists; that it is nourished, as before, by oddities and contrasts; and that taste, in spite of all culture, will never become acclimatised; that incongruities, far from shocking, delight it; that it is insensible to French sweetness and refinements; that it needs a succession of expressive figures, unexpected and grinning, to pass before it; that it prefers this coarse carnival to delicate insinuations; that Pope belongs to his country, in spite of his classical polish and his studied elegances, and that his unpleasing and vigorous fancy is akin to that of Swift.

We are now prepared and can enter upon his second poem, *The Dunciad.* We need much self-command not to throw down this masterpiece as insipid, and even disgusting. Rarely has so much talent been spent to produce greater tedium. Pope wished to be avenged on his literary enemies, and sang of Dulness, the sublime goddess of literature, 'daughter of Chaos and eternal Night, . . . gross as her sire, and as her mother grave,'[1] queen of hungry authors, who chooses for her son and favourite Cibber. There he is, a king, and to celebrate his accession she institutes public games in imitation of the ancients; first a race of booksellers, trying to seize a poet; then the struggle of the authors, who first vie with each other in braying, and then dash into the Fleet-ditch filth; then the strife of critics, who have to undergo the reading of two voluminous authors without falling asleep.[2] Strange paradise, to be sure, and in truth not very striking. Who is not deafened by these hackneyed and bald allegories, Dulness, poppies, mists, and Sleep? What if I entered into details, and described the poetess offered for a prize, 'with cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes;' if I related the plunges of the authors, floundering in the Fleet-ditch, the vilest sewer in the town; if I transcribed all the extraordinary verses, in which

> 'First he relates, how sinking to the chin,
> Smit with his mien, the mud-nymphs suck'd him in:
> How young Lutetia, softer than the down,
> Nigrina black, and Merdamante brown,
> Vied for his love in jetty bow'rs below.' . . .[3]

I must stop. Some passages, for instance that on the fall of Curl, Swift alone might have seemed capable of writing; we might have excused it in Swift; the extremity of despair, the rage of misanthropy, the approach of madness, might have carried him to such excess. But Pope, who lived calm and admired in his villa, and who was only urged by literary rancour! He can have had no nerves! How could a poet have dragged his talent wantonly through such images, and so con-

[1] Pope's Works, *The Dunciad,* bk. i.
[2] *Ibid.* bk. ii
[3] *Ibid*

strained his ingeniously woven verses to receive such dirt? Picture a pretty drawing-room basket, destined only to contain flowers and fancy-work, sent down to the kitchen to be turned into a receptacle for filth. In fact, all the filth of literary life is here; and heaven knows what it then was! In no age were hack-writers so beggarly and more vile. Poor fellows, like Richard Savage, who slept during one winter in the open air on the cinders of a glass manufactory, lived on what he received for a dedication, knew the inside of a prison, rarely dined, and drank at the expense of his friends; pamphleteers like Tutchin, who was scandly whipped; plagiarists like Ward, exposed in the pillory and pelted with rotten eggs and apples; courtesans like Eliza Heywood, notorious by the shamelessness of their public confessions; bought journalists, hired slanderers, vendors of scandal and insults, half-rogues, complete roysterers, and all the literary vermin which haunted the gambling-houses, the stews, the gin-cellars, and at a sign from a book-seller stung honest folk for a crown. These villanies, foul linen, the greasy coat six years old, musty pudding, and the rest, are in Pope as in Hogarth, with English crudity and preciseness. This is their fault, they are realists, even under the classical wig; they do not disguise what is ugly and mean; they describe that ugliness and meanness with their exact outlines and distinguishing marks; they do not clothe them in a fine cloak of general ideas; they do not cover them with the pretty innuendoes of society. This is the reason why their satires are so harsh. Pope does not flog the dunces, he knocks them down; his poem is truly hard and mischievous; it is so much so, that it becomes clumsy: to add to the punishment of dunces, he begins at the deluge, writes historical passages, represents at length the past, present, and future empire of Dulness, the library of Alexandria burned by Omar, learning extinguished by the invasion of the barbarians and by the superstition of the middle-age, the empire of stupidity which extends over England and will swallow it up. What paving-stones to crush flies!

> 'See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
> Mountains of casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
> Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
> Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
> Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
> And Metaphysic calls for aid on sense! . . .
> Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares Morality expires.
> Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word:
> Thy hand, great anarch! lets the curtain fall;
> And universal darkness buries all.'[1]

[1] *The Dunciad*, the end.

The last scene ends with noise, cymbals and trombones, crackers and fireworks. For me, I carry away from this celebrated entertainment only the remembrance of a hubbub. Unwittingly I have counted the lights, I know the machinery, I have touched the toilsome stage-property of apparitions and allegories. I bid farewell to the scene painter, the machinist, the manager of literary effects, and go elsewhere to find the poet.

IV.

There is, however, a poet in Pope, and to discover him we have only to read him by fragments; if the whole is, as a rule, wearisome or shocking, the details are admirable. It is so at the end of all literary ages. Pliny the younger, and Seneca, so affected and so inflated, are charming in small bits; each of their phrases, taken by itself, is a masterpiece; each verse in Pope is a masterpiece when taken alone. At this time, and after a hundred years of culture, there is no movement, no object, no action, which poets cannot describe. Every aspect of nature was observed; a sunrise, a landscape reflected in the water,[1] a breeze amid the foliage, and so forth. Ask Pope to paint in verse an eel, a perch, or a trout; he has the exact phrase ready; you might glean from him the contents of a 'Gradus.' He gives the features so exactly, that at once you think you see the thing; he gives the expression so copiously, that your imagination, however obtuse, will end by seeing it. He marks everything in the flight of a pheasant:

> 'See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs
> And mounts exulting on triumphant wings. . . .
> Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
> His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
> The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
> His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?'[2]

He possesses the richest store of words to depict the sylphs which flutter round his heroine Belinda:

> 'But now secure the painted vessel glides,
> The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
> While melting music steals upon the sky,
> And softened sounds along the waters die;
> Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play, . . .
> The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
> Soft o'er the shrouds the aërial whispers breathe,
> That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.

[1] Pope's Works, i. 352; *Windsor Forest*, v. 211.

> 'Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies
> The headlong mountains and the downward skies,
> The wat'ry landscape of the pendant woods,
> And absent trees that tremble in the floods.'

[2] *Ibid.* 247 v. 111–118.

Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garment flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.'

Doubtless these are not Shakspeare's sylphs; but side by side with a natural and living rose, we may still look with pleasure on a flower of diamonds, as they come from the hand of the jeweller, a masterpiece of art and patience, whose facets make the light glitter, and cast a shower of sparkles over the filagree foliage in which they are embedded. A score of times in a poem of Pope's we stop to look with wonder on one of these literary adornments. He feels so well in which the strong point of his talent lies, that he abuses it; he delights to show his skill. What can be staler than a card party, or more repellent of poetry than the queen of spades or the king of hearts? Yet, doubtless for a wager, he has recorded in the *Rape of the Lock* a game of ombre; we follow it, hear it, recognise the dresses:

'Behold, four kings, in majesty revered,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer power;
Four knaves in garb succinct, a trusty band;
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And parti-coloured troops, a shining train,
Drawn forth to combat on the velvet plain.'[2]

We see the trumps, the cuts, the tricks, and instantly afterwards the coffee, the china, the spoons, the fiery spirits (to wit, spirits of wine); we have here in advance the modes and periphrases of Delille. The celebrated verses in which Delille at once employs and describes imitative harmony, are translated from Pope.[3] It is an expiring poetry, but poetry still: an ornament to put on a mantelpiece is an inferior work of art, but still it is a work of art.

To descriptive talent Pope unites oratorical talent. This art, proper to the classical age, is the art of expressing mediocre general ideas. For a hundred and fifty years men of both the thinking countries, England and France, employed herein all their studies. They seized these universal and limited truths, which, being situated between lofty philo-

[1] Pope's Works, ii. 154; *The Rape of the Lock*, c. 2, *v.* 47–68.

[2] *Ibid.* c. 3, 160, *v.* 37–44.

[3] 'Peins-moi légèrement l'amant léger de Flore,
Qu'un doux ruisseau murmure en vers plus doux encore,' etc.

sophical abstractions and petty sensible details, are the subject-matter of eloquence and rhetoric, and form what we now-a-days call commonplaces. They arranged them in compartments; methodically developed them; made them obvious by grouping and symmetry; disposed them in regular successions, which with dignity and majesty advance under discipline, and in a body. The influence of this oratorical reason became so great, that it was imposed on poetry itself. Buffon ends by saying, in praise of verses, that they are as fine as fine prose. In fact, poetry at this time became a more affected prose subjected to rhyme. It was only a kind of higher conversation and more select discourse. It is found powerless when it is necessary to paint or represent an action, when the need is to see and make visible living passions, large genuine emotions, men of flesh and blood; it results only in college epics like the *Henriade*, freezing odes and tragedies like those of Voltaire and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, or those of Addison, Thomson, Johnson, and the rest. It makes them up of dissertations, because it is capable of nothing else but dissertations. Here henceforth is its domain; and its final task is the didactic poem, which is a dissertation in verse. Pope excelled in it, and his most perfect poems are those made up of precepts and arguments. Artifice in these is less shocking than elsewhere. A poem—I am wrong, essays like his upon *Criticism*, on *Man*, and the *Government of Providence*, on the *Knowledge and Characters of Men*, deserve to be written after reflection; they are a study, and almost a scientific monograph. We may, we even ought, to weigh all the words, and verify all the connections: art and attention are not superfluous; the question concerns exact precepts and close arguments. In this Pope is incomparable. I do not think that there is in the world a versified prose like his; that of Boileau does not approach it. Not that its ideas are very worthy of attention; we have worn them out, they interest us no longer. The *Essay on Criticism* resembles Boileau's *Epîtres* and *L'Art Poétique*, excellent works, no longer read but in classes at school. It is a collection of very wise precepts, whose only fault is their being too true. To say that good taste is rare; that we ought to reflect and be instructed before deciding; that the rules of art are drawn from nature; that pride, ignorance, prejudice, partiality, envy, pervert our judgment; that a criticism should be sincere, modest, polished, kindly,—all these truths might then be discoveries, but not so now. I suppose that, at the time of Pope, Dryden, and Boileau, men had special need of setting their ideas in order, and of seeing them very clearly in very clear phrases. Now that this need is satisfied, it has disappeared: we demand ideas, not arrangement of ideas; the pigeonholes are manufactured, fill them. Pope was obliged to do it once in the *Essay on Man*, which is a sort of *Vicaire Savoyard*,[1] less original

[1] A tale of J. J. Rousseau, in which he tries to depict a philosophical clergyman.—TR.

than the other. He shows that God made all for the best, that man is limited in his capacity and ought not to judge God, that our passions and imperfections serve for the general good and for the ends of Providence, that happiness lies in virtue and submission to the divine will. You recognise here a sort of deism and optimism, of which there was much at that time, borrowed, like those of Rousseau, from the *Theodicea* of Leibnitz, but tempered, toned down, and arranged for the use of honest people. The conception is not very lofty: this curtailed deity, making his appearance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, is but a residuum: religion being extinguished, he remained at the bottom of the crucible; and the reasoners of the time, having no metaphysical inventiveness, kept him in their system to stop a gap. In this state and at this place this deity resembles classic verse. He has an imposing appearance, is comprehended easily, is stripped of efficacy, is the product of cold argumentative reason, and leaves the people who attend to him, very much at ease; on all these accounts he is akin to an Alexandrine. This poor conception is all the more wretched in Pope from not belonging to him, for he is only accidentally a philosopher; and to find matter for his poem, three or four systems, deformed and attenuated, are amalgamated in his work. He boasts of having tempered them one with the other, and having 'steered between the extremes.'[1] The truth is, that he did not understand them, and that he jumbles incongruous ideas at every step. There is a passage in which, to obtain an effect of style, he becomes a pantheist; moreover, he is bombastic, and assumes the supercilious, imperious tone of a young doctor. I find no individual invention except in his *Moral Essays;* in them is a theory of dominant passion which is worth reading. After all, he went farther than Boileau, for instance, in the knowledge of man. Psychology is indigenous in England; we meet it there throughout, even in the least creative minds. It gives rise to the novel, dispossesses philosophy, produces the essay, appears in the newspapers, fills current literature, like those indigenous plants which multiply on every soil.

But if the ideas are mediocre, the art of expressing them is truly marvellous: marvellous is the word. 'I chose verse,' says Pope in his *Design of an Essay on Man*, 'because I found I could express them (ideas) more shortly this way than in prose itself.' In fact, every word is effective: every passage must be read slowly; every epithet is an epitome; a more condensed style was never written; and, on the other hand, no one laboured more skilfully in introducing philosophical formulas into the current conversation of society. His maxims have become proverbs. I open his *Essay on Man* at random, and fall upon the beginning of his second book. An orator, an author of the school of Buffon, would be transported with admiration to see so many literary treasures collected in so small a space:

[1] These words are taken from the *Design of an Essay on Man*

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such
Whether he thinks too little or too much;
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused, or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.'[1]

The first verse epitomises the whole of the preceding book, and the second epitomises the present one; it is, as it were, a kind of staircase leading from temple to temple, regularly composed of symmetrical steps, so aptly disposed that from the first step we see at a glance the whole building we have left, and from the second the whole edifice we are about to visit. Have you ever seen a finer entrance, or one more conformable to the rules which bid us unite our ideas, recall them when developed, pre-announce them when not yet developed? But this is not enough. After this brief announcement, which premises that he is about to treat of human nature, a longer announcement is necessary, to paint in advance, with the greatest possible splendour, this human nature of which he is about to treat. This is the proper oratorical exordium, like those which Bossuet sets at the beginning of his funeral orations; a sort of elaborate portico to receive the audience on their entrance, and prepare them for the magnificence of the temple. Couple by couple the antitheses follow each other like a succession of columns; thirteen couples form a suite; and the last is raised above the rest by a word, which concentrates and combines all. In other hands this prolongation of the same form would become tedious; in Pope's it interests us, so much variety is there in the arrangement and the adornments. In one place the antithesis is comprised in a single line, in another it occupies two; now it is in the substantives, now in the adjectives and verbs; now only in the ideas, now it penetrates the sound and position of the words. In vain we see it reappear; we are not wearied, because each time it adds somewhat to our idea, and shows us the object in a new light. This object itself may be abstract, obscure, unpleasant, opposed to poetry; the style spreads over it its own light; noble images borrowed from the grand and simple spectacles of nature, illustrate and adorn it.

[1] Pope's Works, ii.; *An Essay on Man*, Ep. ii. 375, *v.* 1–18.

For there is a classical architecture of ideas as well as of stones: the first like the second, is a friend to clearness and regularity, majesty and calm; like the second, it was invented in Greece, transmitted through Rome to France, through France to England, and slightly altered in its passage. Of all the masters who have practised it in England, Pope is the most skilled.

If Pope's arguments were written in prose, the reader would hardly be moved by them; he would instinctively think of Pascal's book, and remark upon the astonishing difference between a versifier and a man. A good epitome, a good bit of style, well worked out, well written, he would say, and nothing further. Clearly the beauty of the verses arose from the difficulty overcome, the chosen sounds, the symmetrical rhythms; this was all, and it was not much. A great writer is a man who, having passions, knows his dictionary and grammar; Pope thoroughly knew his dictionary and his grammar, but stopped there.

People will say that this merit is small, and that I do not inspire them with a desire to read Pope's verses. True; at least I do not counsel them to read many. I would add, however, by way of excuse, that there is a kind in which he succeeds, that his descriptive and oratorical talents find in portraiture matter which suits them, and that in this he frequently approaches La Bruyère; that several of his portraits, those of Addison, Lord Hervey, Lord Wharton, the Duchess of Marlborough, are medals worthy of finding a place in the cabinet of the curious, and of remaining in the archives of the human race; that when he chisels one of these heads, the abbreviative images, the unlooked-for connections of words, the sustained and multiplied contrasts, the perpetual and extraordinary conciseness, the incessant and increasing impulse of all the strokes of eloquence combined upon the same spot, stamp upon the memory an impress which we never forget. It is better to repudiate these partial apologies, and frankly to avow that, on the whole, this great poet, the glory of his age, is wearisome, wearisome to us. 'A woman of forty,' says Stendhal, 'is only beautiful to those who have loved her in their youth.' The poor muse in question is not forty years old for us; she is a hundred and forty. Let us remember, when we wish to judge her fairly, the time when we made French verses like our Latin verse. The taste has been transformed an age ago, for the human mind has wheeled round; with the prospect the perspective has changed; we must take this displacement into account. Now-a-days we demand new ideas and bare sentiments; we care no longer for the clothing, we want the thing. Exordium, transitions, peculiarities of style, elegances of expression, the whole literary wardrobe, is sent to the old-clothes shop; we only keep what is indispensable; we trouble ourselves no more about adornment, but about truth. The men of the preceding century were quite different. This was seen when Pope translated the *Iliad;* it was the *Iliad* written in the style of the *Henriade:* by virtue of this travesty the public admired

it. They would not have admired it in the simple Greek guise; they only consented to see it in powder and ribbons. It was the costume of the time, and it was very necessary to put it on. Dr. Johnson in his commercial and academical style affirms even that the demand for elegance had increased so much, that pure nature could no longer be borne.

Good society and men of letters made a little world by themselves, which had been formed and refined after the manner and ideas of France. They had taken a correct and noble style at the same time as fashion and fine manners. They held by this style as by their coat; it was a matter of propriety or ceremony; there was an accepted and unalterable pattern; they could not change it without indecency or ridicule: to write, not according to the rules, especially in verse, effusively and naturally, would have been like showing oneself in the drawing-room in slippers and a dressing-gown. Their pleasure in reading verse was to try whether the pattern had been exactly followed, originality was only permitted in details; you might adjust here a lace, there some band, but you were bound scrupulously to preserve the conventional form, to brush everything minutely, and never to appear without new gold lace and glossy broadcloth. The attention was only bestowed on refinements; a more elaborate braid, a more brilliant velvet, a feather more gracefully arranged; to this were boldness and experiment reduced; the smallest incorrectness, the slightest incongruity, would have offended their eyes; they perfected the infinitely little. Men of letters acted like these coquettes, for whom the superb goddesses of Michael Angelo and Rubens are but milkmaids, but who utter a cry of pleasure at the sight of a ribbon at twenty francs a yard. A division, a displacing of verses, a metaphor delighted them, and this was all which could still transport them. They went on day by day embroidering, bedizening, narrowing the bright classic robe, until at last the human mind, feeling fettered, tore it, cast it away, and began to move. Now that this robe is on the ground the critics pick it up, hang it up in their museums, so that everybody can see it, shake it, and try to conjecture from it the feelings of the fine lords and of the fine speakers who wore it.

V.

It is not everything to have a beautiful dress, strongly sewn and fashionable; one must be able to get into it easily. Reviewing the whole train of the English poets of the eighteenth century, we perceive that they do not easily get into the classical dress. This gold-embroidered jacket, so well fitted for a Frenchman, hardly suits their figure; from time to time a hasty, awkward movement makes rents in the sleeves and elsewhere. For instance, Matthew Prior seems at first sight to have all the qualities necessary to wear the jacket well; he has been an ambassador to France, and writes pretty French *vers de société;* he turns off with facility little jesting poems on a dinner, a lady; he is gallant, a man of society, a pleasant story-teller, epicurean, even sceptical like

the courtiers of Charles II., that is to say, as far as and including political roguery; in short, he is an accomplished man of the world, as times went, with a correct and flowing style, having at command a light and a noble verse, and pulling, according to the rules of Bossu and Boileau, the string of mythological puppets. With all this, we find him neither gay enough nor refined enough. Bolingbroke called him wooden-faced, stubborn, and said he had something Dutch in his appearance. His manners smacked very strongly of those of Rochester, and the well-clad refuse which the Restoration bequeathed to the Revolution. He took the first woman at hand, shut himself up with her for several days, drank hard, fell asleep, and let her make off with his money and clothes. Amongst other drabs, ugly enough and always dirty, he finished by keeping Elizabeth Cox, and all but married her; fortunately he died just in time. His style was like his manners. When he tried to imitate La Fontaine's *Hans Carvel*, he made it dull, and lengthened it; he could not be piquant, but he was biting; his obscenities have a cynical crudity; his raillery is a satire; and in one of his poems, *To a Young Gentleman in Love*, the lash becomes a knock-down blow. On the other hand, he was not a common roysterer. Of his two principal poems, one on *Solomon* paraphrases and treats of the remark of Ecclesiastes, 'All is vanity.' From this picture you see forthwith that you are in a biblical land: such an idea would not then have occurred to a friend of the Regent of France, the Duke of Orleans. Solomon relates how he in vain 'proposed his doubts to the lettered Rabbins,' how he has been equally unfortunate in the hopes and desires of love, the possession of power, and ends by trusting to an 'omniscient Master, omnipresent King.' Here we have English gloom and English conclusions.[1] Moreover, under the rhetorical and uniform composition of his verses, we perceive warmth and passion, rich paintings, a sort of magnificence, and the profusion of a surcharged imagination. The sap in England is always stronger than in France; the sensations there are deeper, and the thoughts more original. Prior's other poem, very bold and philosophical, against conventional truths and pedantries, is a droll discourse on the seat of the soul, from which Voltaire has taken many ideas and much foulness. The whole arsenal of the sceptic and materialist was built and published in England, when the French took to it. Voltaire has only selected and sharpened the arrows. Observe also that this poem is wholly written in a prosaic style, with a harsh common sense and a medical frankness, unterrified by the foulest abominations.[2] *Candide* and the *Earl of Chesterfield's*

[1] Prior's Works, ed. Gilfillan, 1851:

'In the remotest wood and lonely grot,
Certain to meet that worst of evils, *thought*.'

[2] *Alma*, canto, ii. *v.* 937–978:

'Your nicer Hottentots think meet
With guts and tripe to deck their feet,

Ears, by Voltaire, are more brilliant but not more genuine productions. On the whole, with his coarseness, want of taste, prolixity, perspicacity, passion, there is something in this man not in accordance with classical elegance. He goes beyond it or does not attain it.

This uncongeniality increases, and attentive eyes soon discover under the regular cloak a kind of energetic and precise imagination, ready to break through it. In this age lived Gay, a sort of La Fontaine, as near La Fontaine as an Englishman can be, that is, not very near, but at least kind and amiable, very sincere, very frank, strangely thoughtless, born to be duped, and a young man to the last. Swift said of him that he ought never to have lived more than twenty-two years. 'In wit a man, simplicity a child,' wrote Pope. He lived, like La Fontaine, at the expense of the great, travelled as much as he could at their charge, lost his money in South-Sea speculations, aspired to a place at court, wrote fables full of humanity to form the heart of the Duke of Cumberland,[1] ended by settling as a friend and parasite, as a domestic poet with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. He had little of the grave in his character; not much of scruple and persistence. It was his sad lot, he said, 'that he could get nothing from the court, whether he wrote for or against it.' And he wrote his own epitaph:

> 'Life is a jest; and all things show it,
> I thought so once; but now I know it.'[2]

This careless laugher, to revenge himself on the minister, wrote the *Beggars' Opera*, the fiercest and dirtiest of caricatures.[3] In this court they slaughter men in place of scratching them; babes handle the knife like the rest. Yet he was a laugher, but in a style of his own, or rather in that of his country. Seeing 'certain young men of insipid delicacy,'[4] Ambrose Philips, for instance, who wrote elegant and tender pastorals, in the manner of Fontenelle, he amused himself by parodying and contradicting them, and in the *Shepherd's Week* introduced real rural manners into the metre and form of the visionary poetry:

'Thou wilt not find my shepherdess idly piping on oaten reeds, but milking the kine, tying up the sheaves, or, if the hogs are astray, driving them to their

> With downcast looks on Totta's legs
> The ogling youth most humbly begs,
> She would not from his hopes remove
> At once his breakfast and his love. . . .
> Before you see, you smell your toast.
> And sweetest she who stinks the most'

[1] The duke who was afterwards nicknamed 'the Butcher.'

[2] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Mr. John Gay, 1745, 2 vols. ii. 141.

[3] See vol. ii. ch. ii. p. 50.

[4] *Poems on Several Occasions;* The Proeme to *The Shepherd's Week*. i 64.

styes. My shepherd . . sleepeth not under myrtle shades, but under a hedge, nor doth he vigilantly defend his flocks from wolves, because there are none.'[1]

Fancy a shepherd of Theocritus or Virgil, compelled to put on hob-nailed shoes and the dress of a Devonshire cowherd; such an oddity would amuse us by the contrast of his person and his garments. So here *The Magician*, *The Shepherd's Struggle*, are travestied in a modern guise. Listen to the song of the first shepherd, 'Lobbin Clout:'

> 'Leek to the Welch, to Dutchmen butter's dear,
> Of Irish swains potatoe is the chear;
> Oat for their feasts, the Scotish shepherds grind,
> Sweet turnips are the food of Blouzelind.
> While she loves turnips, butter I'll despise,
> Nor leeks, nor oatmeal, nor potatoe prize.'[2]

The other shepherd answers in the same metre; and the duet continues, verse after verse, in the ancient manner, but now amidst turnips, strong beer, fat pigs, bespattered at will by modern country vulgarities and the dirt of a northern climate. Van Ostade and Teniers love these vulgar and clownish idyls; and in Gay, as well as with them, unvarnished and sensual drollery has its sway. The people of the north, who are great eaters, always liked country fairs. The vagaries of toss-pots and gossips, the grotesque outburst of the popular and animal mind, put them into good humour. One must be genuinely a worldling or an artist, a Frenchman or an Italian, to be disgusted with them. They are the product of the country, as well as meat and beer: let us try, in order that we may enjoy them, to forget wine, delicate fruits, to give ourselves blunted senses, to become in imagination compatriots of such men. We have become used to the pictures of these drunken clods, which Louis XIV. called 'baboons,' to these red cooks who scrape their horse-raddish, and to the like scenes. Let us get used to Gay: to his poem *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London;* to his advice as to dirty gutters, and shoes 'with firm, well-hammer'd soles;' his description of the amours of the goddess Cloacina and a scavenger, whence sprang the shoeblacks. He is a lover of the real, has a precise imagination, does not see objects on a large scale, but singly, with all their outlines and surroundings, whatever they may be, beautiful or ugly, dirty or clean. The other literary men act likewise, even the known classical writers, even Pope. There is in Pope a minute description, adorned with high-coloured words, local details, in which abbreviative and characteristic features are stamped with such a liberal and sure hand, that you would take the author for a modern realist, and would find in the work an historical document.[3] As to Swift, he is the

[1] The Proeme to *The Shepherd's Week*, i. 66.

[2] Gay's Poems, *The Shepherd's Week;* first pastoral, *The Squabble*, p. 80.

[3] *Epistle to Mrs. Blount*, 'on her leaving the town.'

bitterest positivist, and more so in poetry than in prose. Read his eclogue on *Strephon and Chloe*, if you would know how far men can debase the noble poetic drapery. They make a dishclout of it, or dress clodhoppers in it; the Roman toga and Greek chlamys do not suit these barbarians' shoulders. They are like those knights of the middle-ages, who, when they had taken Constantinople, muffled themselves for a joke, in long Byzantine robes, and went riding through the streets in these disguises, dragging their embroidery in the gutter.

These men will do well, like the knights, to return to their manor, their country, the mud of their ditches, and the dunghill of their farmyards. The less man is fitted for social life, the more he is fitted for solitary life. He enjoys the country the more for enjoying the world less. Englishmen have always been more feudal and more fond of the country than Frenchmen. Under Louis XIV. and Louis XV. the worst misfortune for a nobleman was to go to his estate in the country and grow rusty there; away from the smiles of the king and the fine conversations of Versailles; there was nothing left but to yawn and die In England, in spite of the artificial civilisation and worldly ceremonies, the love of the chase and of physical exercises, political interests and the necessities of elections brought the nobles back to their domains. And there their natural instincts returned. A sad and impassioned man, naturally self-dependent, converses with objects; a grand grey sky, whereon the autumn mists slumber, a sudden burst of sunshine lighting up a moist field, depress or excite him; inanimate things seem to him instinct with life; and the feeble clearness, which in the morning reddens the fringe of heaven, moves him as much as the smile of a young girl at her first ball. Thus is genuine descriptive poetry born. It appears in Dryden, in Pope himself, even in the writers of elegant pastorals, and breaks out in Thomson's *Seasons*. This poet, the son of a clergyman, and very poor, lived, like most of the literary men of the time, on benefactions and literary subscriptions, on sinecures and political pensions; he did not marry for lack of money; wrote tragedies, because tragedies were lucrative; and ended by settling in a country-house, lying in bed till mid-day, indolent, contemplative, but a good and honest man, affectionate and beloved. He saw and loved the country in its smallest details, not outwardly only, as Saint Lambert,[1] his imitator; he made it his joy, his amusement, his habitual occupation; a gardener at heart, delighted to see the spring arrive, happy to be able to enclose an extra field in his garden. He paints all the little things, without being ashamed, for they interest him; takes pleasure in 'the smell of the dairy;' you hear him speak of the 'insect armies,' and 'when the envenomed leaf begins to curl,'[2] and of the birds which,

[1] A French pastoral writer (1717–1803), who wrote, in imitation of Thomson's *Les Saisons*,—TR.

[2] *Poetical Works of J. Thompson*, ed R. Bell, 1855, 2 vols.; ii. *Spring*, 18

foreseeing the approaching rain, 'streak their wings with oil, to throw the lucid moisture trickling off.'[1] He perceives objects so clearly that he makes them visible: we recognise the English landscape, green and moist, half drowned in floating vapours, blotted here and there by violet clouds, which burst in showers at the horizon, which they darken:

'Th' effusive South
Warms the wide air, and o'er the void of heaven
Breathes the big clouds with vernal showers distent.[2]
Thus all day long the full-distended clouds
Indulge their genial stores, and well-showered earth
Is deep enriched with vegetable life;
Till, in the western sky, the downward sun
Looks out, effulgent from amid the flush
Of broken clouds, gay-shifting to his beam.
The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes
The illumined mountain; through the forest streams;
Shakes on the floods; and in a yellow mist,
Far smoking o'er the interminable plain,
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.
Moist, bright, and green, the landscape laughs around.'[3]

This is emphatic, but it is also opulent. In this air and this vegetation, in this imagination and this style, there is a heaping up, and, as it were, an imparting of effaced or sparkling tints; they are here the glistening and lustrous robe of nature and art. We must see them in Rubens—he is the painter and poet of the teeming and humid clime; but we find it also in others, and in this magnificence of Thomson: in this exaggerated, luxuriant, grand colouring, we find occasionally the rich palette of Rubens.

VI.

All this suits ill the classical embroidery. Thomson's visible imitations of Virgil, his episodes inserted like a veneering, his invocations to spring, to the muse, to philosophy, all the relics of the conventionalisms of the college, produce an incongruity. But the contrast is much more marked in another way. The worldly artificial life such as Louis XIV had made fashionable, began to weary Europe. It was found dry and hollow; people grew tired of always acting, submitting to etiquette. They felt that gallantry is not love, nor madrigals poetry, nor amusement happiness. They perceived that man is not an elegant doll, or a dandy the masterpiece of nature, and that there is a world outside the drawing-rooms. A Genevese plebeian (J. J. Rousseau), Protestant and solitary, whom religion, education, poverty, and genius had led more quickly and further than others, spoke out the public secret aloud; and it was thought that he had discovered or rediscovered the country, conscience, religion, the rights of man, and natural sentiments. Then

[1] Poetical Works of Thomson, *Spring*, ii. 19. [2] *Ibid.* 19.
[3] *Ibid.* 20.

appeared a new personality, the idol and model of his time, the sensitive man, who, by his grave character and relish of nature, contrasted with the man of the court. Doubtless this personality smacks of the places he has frequented. He is refined and insipid, melting at the sight of the young lambs nibbling the springing grass, blessing the little birds, who give a concert to celebrate their happiness. He is emphatic and wordy, writes tirades on sentiment, inveighs against the age, apostrophises virtue, reason, truth, and the abstract divinities, which are engraved in delicate outline on the frontispiece. In spite of himself, he continues a man of the drawing-room and the academy; after uttering sweet things to the ladies, he utters them to nature, and declaims in polished periods about the Deity. But after all, it is through him that the revolt against classical customs begins; and in this respect, it is more precocious in Germanic England than in Latin France. Thirty years before Rousseau, Thomson had expressed all Rousseau's sentiments, almost in the same style. Like him, he painted the country with sympathy and enthusiasm. Like him, he contrasted the golden age of primitive simplicity with modern miseries and corruption. Like him, he exalted deep love, conjugal tenderness, the union of souls, and perfect esteem animated by desire, paternal affection, and all domestic joys. Like him, he combated contemporary frivolity, and compared the ancient with the modern republics:

> 'Proofs of a people, whose heroic aims
> Soared far above the little selfish sphere
> Of doubting modern life.'[1]

Like Rousseau, he praised gravity, patriotism, liberty, virtue; rose from the spectacle of nature to the contemplation of God, and showed to man glimpses of immortal life beyond the tomb. Like him, in fine, he marred the sincerity of his emotion and the truth of his poetry by sentimental vapidities, by pastoral billing and cooing, and by such an abundance of epithets, personified abstractions, pompous invocations and oratorical tirades, that we perceive in him beforehand the false and decorative style of Thomas, David,[2] and the Revolution.

Others follow. The literature of that period might be called the library of the sensitive man. First there was Richardson, the puritanic printer, with his Sir Charles Grandison,[3] a man of principles, accomplished model of the gentleman, professor of decorum and morality, with a soul into the bargain. There is Sterne too, the refined and sickly blackguard, who, amid his buffooneries and oddities, pauses to weep over an ass or an imaginary prisoner.[4] There is, in particular, Mackenzie, 'the Man of Feeling,' whose timid, delicate hero weeps five or six times a day; who grows consumptive through sensibility, dares

[1] Poetical Works of Thomson, *Liberty*, part i. 102.

[2] See the paintings of David, called *Les Fêtes de la Révolution.*

[3] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 6, p. 167. [4] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 7, p. 179

not broach his love till at the point of death, and dies in broaching it. Naturally, praise induces satire; and in the opposite field we see Fielding, valiant roysterer, and Sheridan, brilliant rake, the one with Blifil, the other with Joseph Surface, two hypocrites, especially the second, not coarse, red-faced, and smelling of the vestry, like Tartuffe, but worldly, well-clad, a good speaker, loftily serious, sad and gentle from excess of tenderness, who, with his hand on his heart and a tear in his eye, showers on the public his sentences and periods, whilst he soils his brother's reputation and debauches his neighbour's wife. A character, thus created, soon has an epic made for him. A Scotchman, a man of wit, of overmuch wit, having written to his cost an unsuccessful rhapsody, wished to recover himself, went amongst the mountains of his country, gathered picturesque images, collected fragments of legends, plastered over the whole an abundance of eloquence and rhetoric, and created a Celtic Homer, Ossian, who, with Oscar, Malvina, and his whole troop, made the tour of Europe, and, about 1830, ended by furnishing baptismal names for French *grisettes* and *perruquiers*. Macpherson displayed to the world an imitation of primitive manners, not over-true, for the extreme rudeness of barbarians would have shocked the people, but yet well enough preserved or portrayed to contrast with modern civilisation, and persuade the public that they were looking upon pure nature. A keen sympathy with Scotch landscape, so grand, so cold, so gloomy, rain on the hills, the birch trembling to the wind, the mist of heaven and the vagueness of the soul, so that every dreamer found there the emotions of his solitary walks and his philosophical glooms; chivalric exploits and magnanimity, heroes who set out alone to engage an army, faithful virgins dying on the tomb of their betrothed; an impassioned, coloured style, affecting to be abrupt, yet polished; able to charm a disciple of Rousseau by its warmth and elegance: here was something to transport the young enthusiasts of the time, civilised barbarians, scholarly lovers of nature, dreaming of the delights of savage life, whilst they shook off the powder which the hairdresser had left on their coats.

Yet this is not the course of the main current of poetry; it lies in the direction of sentimental reflection: the greatest number of poems, and those most sought after, are emotional dissertations. In fact, a sensitive man breaks out in violent declamations. When he sees a cloud, he dreams of human nature, and constructs a phrase. Hence at this time among poets, swarm the melting philosophers and the tearful academicians; Gray, the morose hermit of Cambridge, and Akenside, a noble thinker, both learned imitators of lofty Greek poetry; Beattie, a metaphysical moralist, with a young girl's nerves and an old maid's hobbies; the amiable and affectionate Goldsmith, who wrote the *Vicar of Wakefield*,[1] the most charming of Protestant

[1] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 8, p. 182.

pastorals; poor Collins, a young enthusiast, who was disgusted with life, would read nothing but the Bible, went mad, was shut up in an asylum, and in his intervals of liberty wandered in Chichester cathedral, accompanying the music with sobs and groans; Glover, Watts, Shenstone, Smart, and others. The titles of their works sufficiently indicate their character. One writes a poem on *The Pleasures of Imagination*, another on the *Passions* and on *Liberty*; one an *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* and a *Hymn to Adversity*, another a poem on a *Deserted Village*, and on the character of surrounding civilisations (Goldsmith's *Traveller*); another a sort of epic on *Thermopylæ*, and another the moral history of a young *Minstrel*. They were nearly all grave, spiritual men, impassioned for noble ideas, with Christian aspirations or convictions, given to meditating on man, inclined to melancholy, to descriptions, invocations, lovers of abstraction and allegory, who, to attain greatness, willingly mounted on stilts. One of the least strict and most noted of them was Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*, a clergyman and a courtier, who, having vainly attempted to enter Parliament, then to become a bishop, married, lost his wife and children, and made use of his misfortunes to write meditations on *Life*, *Death*, *Immortality*, *Time*, *Friendship*, *The Christian Triumph*, *Virtue's Apology*, *A Moral Survey of the Nocturnal Heavens*, and many other similar pieces. Doubtless there are brilliant flashes of imagination in his poems; seriousness and elevation are not wanting; we can even see that he aims at them; but we discover much more quickly that he makes the most of his grief, and strikes attitudes. He exaggerates and declaims, studies effects and style, confuses Greek and Christian ideas. Fancy an unhappy father, who says:

> 'Silence and Darkness! Solemn sisters! Twins
> Of ancient night! I to Day's soft-ey'd sister pay my court
> (Endymion's rival), and her aid implore
> Now first implor'd in succour to the Muse.'[1]

And a few pages further on invokes heaven and earth, when mentioning the resurrection of the Saviour. And yet the sentiment is fresh and sincere. Is it not one of the greatest of modern ideas to put Christian philosophy into verse? Young and his contemporaries say beforehand that which Chateaubriand and Lamartine were to discover. The true, the futile, all is here forty years earlier than in France. The angels and the other celestial machinery long figured in England before appearing in Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* and the *Martyrs*. Atala and Chactas are of the same family as Malvina and Fingal. If M. de Lamartine read Gray's odes and Akenside's reflections, he would find there the melancholy sweetness, the exquisite art, the fine arguments, and half the ideas of his own poetry. And yet, near as they were to a literary renovation, Englishmen did not yet attain it. In vain the

[1] Young's *Night Thoughts*.

foundation was changed, the form persisted. They did not shake off the classical drapery; they write too well, they dare not be natural. They have always a patent stock of fine suitable words, poetic elegances, where each of them thought himself bound to go and search out his phrases. It boots them nothing to be impassioned or realistic; to dare, like Shenstone, describe a *Schoolmistress*, and the very part on which she whips a young rascal; their simplicity is conscious, their frankness archaic, their emotion compassed, their tears academical. Ever, at the moment of writing, an august model starts up, a sort of schoolmaster, weighing on each with his full weight, with all the weight which a hundred and twenty years of literature can give his precepts. Their prose is always the slave of the period: Samuel Johnson, who was at once the La Harpe and the Boileau of his age, explains and imposes on all the studied, balanced, irreproachable phrase; and the classical ascendency is still so strong that it domineers over the infancy of history, the only kind of English literature which was then European and original. Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon were almost French in their taste, language, education, conception of man. They relate like men of the world, cultivated and instructed, with charm and clearness, in a polished, rhythmic, sustained style. They show a liberal spirit, a continuous moderation, an impartial reason. They banish from history all coarseness and tediousness. They write without caprice or prejudice. But, at the same time, they attenuate human nature; comprehend neither barbarism nor exaltation; paint revolutions, as people might do who had seen nothing but decked drawing-rooms and dusted libraries; they judge enthusiasts with the coldness of chaplains or the smile of a sceptic; they blot out the salient features which distinguish human physiognomies; they cover all the harsh points of truth with a brilliant and uniform varnish. At last there started up an unfortunate Scotch ploughman (Burns), rebelling against the world, and in love, with the yearnings, lusts, greatness, and irrationality of modern genius. Now and then, driving his plough, he lighted on genuine verses, verses such as Heine and Alfred de Musset have made in our own days. In those few words, combined after a new fashion, there was a revolution. Two hundred new verses sufficed. The human mind turned on its hinges, and so did civil society. When Roland, being made a minister, presented himself before Louis XVI. in a simple dress-coat and shoes without buckles, the master of the ceremonies raised his hands to heaven, thinking that all was lost. In fact, all was changed.

BOOK IV

MODERN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Ideas and Productions.

I. Changes in society—Rise of democracy—The French Revolution—Desire of getting on—Changes in the human mind—New notion of causes—German philosophy—Craving for the beyond.

II. Robert Burns—His country—Family—Youth—Wretchedness—His yearnings and efforts—Invectives against society and church—The *Jolly Beggars*—Attacks on conventional cant—His idea of natural life—of moral life—Talent—Spontaneity—Style—Innovations—Success—Affectations—Studied letters and academic verse—Farmer's life—Employment in the Excise—Disgust—Excesses—Death.

III. Conservative rule in England—The Revolution affects the style only—Cowper—Sickly refinement—Madness—Retirement—*The Task*—Modern idea of poetry—Of style.

IV. The Romantic school—Its pretensions—Its tentatives—The two ideas of modern literature—History enters into literature—Lamb, Coleridge, Southey, Moore—Faults of this school—Why it succeeded less in England than elsewhere—Sir Walter Scott—Education—Antiquarian studies—Aristocratic tastes—Life—Poems—Novels—Incompleteness of his historical imitations—Excellence of his national pictures—His interiors—Amiable raillery—Moral aim—Place in modern civilisation—Development of the novel in England—Realism and uprightness—Wherein this school is cockneyfied and English.

V. Philosophy enters into literature—Lack of harmony in the style—Wordsworth—Character—Condition—Life—Painting of the moral life in the vulgar life—Introduction of the gloomy style and psychological divisions—Faults of style—Loftiness of his sonnets—The *Excursion*—Austere beauty of this Protestant poetry—Shelley—Imprudences—Theories—Fancy—Pantheism—Ideal characters—Life-like scenery—General tendency of the new literature—Gradual introduction of continental ideas.

I.

ON the eve of the nineteenth century began in Europe the great modern revolution. The thinking public and the human mind changed, and underneath these two collisions a new literature sprang up.

The preceding age had done its work. Perfect prose and classical style put within reach of the most backward and the dullest minds the notions of literature and the discoveries of science. Moderate monarchies and regular administrations had permitted the middle class to develop itself under the pompous aristocracy of the court, as useful plants may be seen shooting up under trees which serve for show and ornament. They multiply, grow, rise to the height of their rivals, envelop them in their luxuriant growth, and obscure them by their density. A new world, commonplace, plebeian, thenceforth occupies the ground, attracts the gaze, imposes its form in manners, stamps its image in the mind. Towards the close of the century a sudden concourse of extraordinary events displays it all at once to the light, and sets it on an eminence unknown to any previous age. With the grand applications of science, democracy appears. The steam-engine and spinning-jenny create in England towns of from three hundred and fifty thousand to five hundred thousand souls. The population is doubled in fifty years, and agriculture becomes so perfect, that, in spite of this enormous increase of mouths to be fed, one-sixth of the inhabitants provide from the same soil food for the rest; importations increase threefold, and even more; the tonnage of vessels increases sixfold, the exportation sixfold and more.[1] Prosperity, leisure, instruction, reading, travels, whatever had been the privilege of a few, became the common property of the majority. The rising tide of wealth raised the best of the poor to comfort, and the best of the well-to-do to opulence. The rising tide of civilisation raised the mass of the people to the rudiments of education, and the mass of citizens to complete education. In 1709 appeared the first daily newspaper,[2] as big as a man's hand, which the editor did not know how to fill, and which, added to all the other papers, did not produce yearly three thousand numbers. In 1844 the Stamp Office showed 71 million numbers, many as large and as full as volumes. Artisans and townsfolk, enfranchised, enriched, having gained a competence, left the low depths where they had been buried in their narrow parsimony, ignorance, and routine; they came on the scene, forsook their workman-like and supernumerary's dress, assumed the leading parts by a sudden irruption or a continuous progress, by dint of revolutions, with a prodigality of labour and genius, amidst vast wars, successively or simultaneously in America, France, the whole of Europe, founding or destroying states, inventing or restoring sciences, conquering or acquiring political rights. They grew noble through their great deeds, became the rivals, equals, conquerors of their masters; they need no longer imitate them, being heroes in their

[1] See Alison, *History of Europe;* Porter, *Progress of the Nation.*

[2] In the *Fourth Estate,* by F. Knight Hunt, 2 vols, 1840, it is said (i. 175) that the first daily and morning paper, *The Daily Courant,* appeared in 1709. — Tr.

turn: like them, they can point to their crusades; like them, they have gained the right of having a poetry; and like them, they will have a poetry.

In France, the land of precocious equality and finished revolutions, we must observe this new character—the plebeian bent on getting on: Augereau, son of a greengrocer; Marceau, son of a lawyer; Murat, son of an innkeeper; Ney, son of a cooper; Hoche, an old sergeant, who in his tent, by night, read Condillac's *Traité des Sensations;* and above all, that thin young man, with lank hair, hollow cheeks, dried up with ambition, his heart full of romantic fancies and grand rough-hewn ideas, who, a lieutenant for seven years, read twice through the whole stock of a bookseller at Valence, who about this time (1792) in Italy, though suffering from itch, had just destroyed five armies with a troop of barefooted heroes, and gave his government an account of his victories with all his faults of spelling and of French. He became master, proclaimed himself the representative of the Revolution, declared 'that the career is open to talent,' and impelled others along with him in his enterprises. They follow him, because there is glory, and above all, advancement to be won. 'Two officers,' says Stendhal, 'commanded a battery at Talavera; a ball laid low the captain. "So!" said the lieutenant, "François is dead, I shall be captain." "Not yet," said François, who was only stunned, and got on his feet again.' These two men were neither enemies nor wicked; on the contrary, they were companions and comrades; but the lieutenant wanted to rise a step. Such was the sentiment which provided men for the exploits and carnages of the Empire, which caused the Revolution of 1830, and which now, in this vast stifling democracy, compels men to vie with each other in intrigues and labour, genius and baseness, to get out of their primitive condition, and raise themselves to the summit, whose possession is assigned to their union or promised to their toil. The dominant character now-a-days is no longer the man of the drawing-room, whose place is certain and his fortune made, elegant and unruffled, with no employment but to amuse and please himself; who loves to converse, who is gallant, who passes his life in conversations with highly dressed ladies, amidst the duties of society and the pleasures of the world: it is the man in a black coat, who works alone in his room or rides in a cab to make friends and protectors; often envious, feeling himself always above or below his station in life, sometimes resigned, never satisfied, but fertile in inventions, lavish of trouble, finding the picture of his blemishes and his strength in the drama of Victor Hugo and the novels of Balzac.[1]

There are other and greater cares. With the state of human society, the form of the human mind has changed. It has changed by

a natural and irresistible development, like a flower growing into a fruit, like a fruit turning to seed. The mind renews the evolution which it had already performed in Alexandria, not as then in a deleterious atmosphere, in the universal degradation of enslaved men, in the increasing decadence of a dissolving society, amidst the anguish of despair and the mists of a dream; but lapt in a purifying atmosphere, amidst the visible progress of an improving society and the general ennobling of free and elevated men, amidst the proudest hopes, in the wholesome clearness of experimental sciences. The oratorical age which declined, as it declined in Athens and Rome, grouped all ideas in beautiful commodious compartments, whose subdivisions instantaneously led the gaze towards the object which they would define, so that thenceforth the intellect could enter upon the loftiest conceptions, and seize the aggregate which it had not yet embraced. Isolated nations, French, English, Italians, Germans, came to draw near and know each other after the shaking of the Revolution and the wars of the Empire, as formerly the separate races, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Gauls, by the conquests of Alexander and the domination of Rome: so that henceforth each civilisation, expanded by the collision of neighbouring civilisations, can pass beyond its national limits, and multiply its ideas by the commixture of the ideas of others. History and criticism grew as under the Ptolemies; and from all sides, throughout the universe, at all points of time, they were engaged in resuscitating and explaining literatures, religions, manners, societies, philosophies: so that thenceforth the intellect, enfranchised by the spectacle of past civilisations, could escape from the prejudices of its country. A new race, hitherto torpid, gave the signal: Germany communicated over the whole of Europe the impetus to the revolution of ideas, as France to the revolution of manners. These good folk who smoked and warmed themselves by the side of a stove, and seemed only fit to produce learned editions, found themselves suddenly the promoters and leaders of human thought. No race has such a comprehensive mind; none is so well endowed for lofty speculation. We see it in their language, so abstract, that beyond the Rhine it seems an unintelligible jargon. And yet, thanks to this language, they attained to superior ideas. For the specialty of this revolution, as of the Alexandrian revolution, was that the human mind became more capable of abstraction. They made, on a large scale, the same step as the mathematicians when they passed from arithmetic to algebra, and from the ordinary calculus to the calculus of the infinite. They perceived, that beyond the limited truths of the oratorical age, there were deeper unfoldings; they passed beyond Descartes and Locke, as the Alexandrians beyond Plato and Aristotle: they understood that a great architect, or round and square atoms, were not causes; that fluids, molecules, and monads were not forces; that a spiritual soul or a physiological secretion would not account for thought. They sought religious sentiment beyond dogmas, poetic beauty beyond rules, critical

truth beyond myths. They desired to grasp natural and moral powers themselves, independently of the fictitious supports to which their predecessors had attached them. All these supports, souls and atoms, all these fictions, fluids, and monads, all these conventions, rules of the beautiful and religious symbols, all rigid classifications of things natural, human and divine, faded away and vanished. Thenceforth they were nothing but figures; they were only kept as an aid to the memory, and as auxiliaries of the mind; they served only provisionally, and as starting-points. Through a common movement along the whole line of human thought, causes draw back into an abstract region, where philosophy had not been to search them out for eighteen centuries. Then was manifested the disease of the age, the restlessness of Werther and Faust, very like that which in a similar moment agitated men eighteen centuries ago; I mean, discontent with the present, the vague desire of a higher beauty and an ideal happiness, the painful aspiration for the infinite. Man suffered from doubt, yet he doubted; he tried to seize again his beliefs, they melted in his hand; he would sit down and rest in the doctrines and the satisfactions which sufficed his predecessors, and he does not find them sufficient. He expends himself, like Faust, in anxious researches through science and history, and judges them vain, dubious, good for men like Wagner,[1] pedants of the academy and the library. It is the beyond he sighs for; he forebodes it through the formulas of science, the texts and confessions of the churches, through the amusements of the world, the intoxications of love. A sublime truth exists behind coarse experience and handed-down catechisms; a grand happiness exists beyond the pleasures of society and the delights of a family. Sceptical, resigned, or mystics, they have all caught a glimpse of or imagined it, from Goethe to Beethoven, from Schiller to Heine; they have risen towards it in order to stir up the whole swarm of their grand dreams; they will not be consoled for falling away from it; they have mused upon it, even during their deepest fall; they have instinctively dwelt, like their predecessors the Alexandrians and Christians, in that splendid invisible world in which, in ideal peace, slumber the creative essences and powers; and the vehement aspiration of their heart has drawn from their sphere the elementary spirits, 'film of flame, who flit and wave in eddying motion! birth and the grave, an infinite ocean, a web ever growing, a life ever glowing, ply at Time's whizzing loom, and weave the vesture of God.'[2]

Thus rises the modern man, impelled by two sentiments, one democratic, the other philosophic. From the shallows of his poverty and ignorance he rises with effort, lifting the weight of established society and admitted dogmas, disposed either to reform or to destroy them, and at once generous and rebellious. Then two currents from France and Germany at this moment swept into England. The dykes there

[1] The disciple of Faust.

[2] Goethe's *Faust*, sc. 1.

were so strong, they could hardly force their way, entering more slowly than elsewhere, but entering nevertheless. They made themselves a new course between the ancient barriers, and widened without bursting them, by a peaceful and slow transformation which continues till this day.

II.

The new spirit broke out first in a Scotch peasant, Robert Burns: in fact, the man and the circumstances were suitable; scarcely ever was seen together more of misery and talent. He was born January 1759, in the frost and snow of a Scotch winter, in a cottage of clay built by his father, a poor farmer of Ayrshire; a sad condition, a sad country, a sad lot. A part of the gable fell in a few days after his birth, and his mother was obliged to seek refuge with her child, in the middle of a storm, in a neighbour's house. It is hard to be born in this country. The soil is wretched; and there are many bare hills, where the harvest often fails. Burns' father, already old, having little more than his arms to depend upon, having taken his farm at too high a rent, burdened with seven children, lived parsimoniously, or rather fasting, in solitude, to avoid temptations to expense. 'For several years butchers' meat was a thing unknown in the house.' Robert went barefoot and bareheaded; at 'the age of thirteen he assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen he was the principal labourer on the farm.' The family did all the labour; they kept no servant, male or female. They scarcely ate, and they worked too much. 'This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley slave—brought me to my sixteenth year,' Burns says. His shoulders were bowed, melancholy seized him; 'almost every evening he was constantly afflicted with a dull headache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.' 'The anguish of mind which we felt,' says his brother, 'was very great.' The father grew old; his gray head, careworn brow, temples 'wearing thin and bare,' his tall bent figure, bore witness to the grief and toil which had spent him. The factor wrote him insolent and threatening letters which 'set all the family in tears.' There was a respite when the father changed his farm, but a lawsuit sprang up between him and the proprietor:

> 'After three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a gaol by a consumption, which after two years' promises kindly stepped in.'

In order to snatch something from the claws of the lawyers, the two sons were obliged to step in as creditors for arrears of wages. With this little sum they took another farm. Robert had seven pounds a year for his labour; for several years his whole expenses did not exceed this wretched pittance; he had resolved to succeed by force of abstinence and toil:

'I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets; . . but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest' we lost half our crops.

Troubles came apace; poverty always engenders them. The master-mason Armour, whose daughter was Burns' sweetheart, was said to contemplate prosecuting him, to obtain a guarantee for the support of his expected progeny, though he refused to accept him as a son-in-law. Jean Armour abandoned him; he could not give his name to the child that was coming. He was obliged to hide; he had been subjected to a public punishment. He said: 'Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.' He resolved to leave the country; he agreed with Mr. Charles Douglas for thirty pounds a year to be bookkeeper or overseer on his estate in Jamaica; for want of money to pay the passage, he was about to 'indent himself,' that is, become bound as apprentice, when the success of his volume put a score of guineas into his hands, and for a time brought him brighter days. Such was his life up to the age of twenty-seven, and that which succeeded was little better.

Fancy in this condition a man of genius, a true poet, capable of the most delicate emotions and the most lofty aspirations, wishing to rise, to rise to the summit, of which he deemed himself capable and worthy.[1]

Ambition had early made itself heard in him:

'I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind groping of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. . . . The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance.'[2]

Low occupations depress the soul even more than the body; man perishes in them—is obliged to perish; of necessity there remains of him nothing but a machine: for in the kind of action in which all is monotonous, in which throughout the long day the arms lift the same flail and drive the same plough, if thought does not take this uniform movement, the work is ill done. The poet must take care not to be turned aside by his poetry; to do as Burns did, 'think only of his work whilst he was at it.' He must think of it always, in the evening unyoking his cattle, on Sunday putting on his new coat, counting on his fingers the eggs and poultry, thinking of the kinds of dung, finding a means of using only one pair of shoes, and of selling his hay at a penny a truss more. He will not succeed if he has not the patient

[1] Most of these details are taken from the *Life and Works of Burns*, by R. Chambers, 1851, 4 vols.

[2] Chambers, *Life of Burns*, i. 14.

dulness of a labourer, and the crafty vigilance of a petty shopkeeper. How would you have poor Burns succeed? He was out of place from his birth, and tried his utmost to raise himself above his condition.[1] At the farm at Lochlea, during meal-times, the only moments of relaxation, parents, brothers, and sisters, ate with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other. Burns, at the school of Hugh Rodger, a teacher of mensuration, and later at a club of young men at Torbolton, strove to exercise himself in general questions, and debated *pro* and *con* in order to see both sides of every idea. He carried a book in his pocket to study in spare moments in the fields; he wore out thus two copies of Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*. 'The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I poured over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, sublime, or fustian.' He maintained a correspondence with several of his companions in the same rank of life in order to form his style, kept a common-place book, entered in it ideas on man, religion, the greatest subjects, criticising his first productions. Burns says, 'Never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished.' He thus divined what he did not learn, rose of himself to the level of the most highly cultivated; in a while, at Edinburgh, he was to read through and through respected doctors, Blair himself; he was to see that Blair had attainments, but no depth. At this time he studied minutely and lovingly the old Scotch ballads; and by night in his cold little room, by day whilst whistling at the plough, he invented forms and ideas. We must think of this in order to understand his miseries and his revolt. We must think that the man in whom these great ideas are stirring, threshed the corn, cleaned his cows, went out to dig turf, waded in the muddy snow, and dreaded to come home and find the bailiffs to carry him off to prison. We must think also, that with the ideas of a thinker he had the delicacies and reveries of a poet. Once, having cast his eyes on an engraving representing a dead soldier, and his wife beside him, his child and dog lying in the snow, suddenly, involuntarily, he burst into tears. He writes:

'There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. . . . I listened to the birds and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs or frighten them to another station. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart, at such a time, but must have been interested for his welfare?'[2]

This swarm of grand or graceful dreams, the slavery of mechanical toil and perpetual economy crushed as soon as they began to soar. Add to this a proud character, so proud, that afterwards in the world, amongst the great, 'an honest contempt for whatever bore the

[1] My great constituent elements are pride and passion.

[2] Extract from Burns' common-place book; Chambers' *Life*, i. 79.

appearance of meanness and servility' made him 'fall into the opposite error of hardness of manner.' He had also the consciousness of his own merits. '*Pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an opinion of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour.'[1] What wonder if we find at every step in his poems the bitter protests of an oppressed and rebellious plebeian?

We find such recriminations against all society, against State and Church. Burns has a harsh tone, often the very phrases of Rousseau, and wished to be a 'vigorous savage,' as he says, quit civilised life, the dependence and humiliations which it imposes on the wretched.

'It is mortifying to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an eight-penny taylor, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty'[2] It is hard to

'See yonder poor, oe'rlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.'[3]

Burns says also:

'While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw, . . .
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
That live so bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker
To see their cursed pride.
It's hardly in a body's power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair't.'[4]

But 'a man's a man for a' that,' and the peasant is as good as the lord. There are men noble by nature, and they alone are noble; the coat is the business of the tailor, titles a matter for the Herald's office. 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that.'

[1] Chamber's *Life*, i, 231. Burns had a right to think so; when he spoke at night in an inn, the very servants woke their fellow-labourers to come and hear him.

[2] Chambers, *Life and Works of Robert Burns*, ii. 68.

[3] *Man was made to Mourn*, a dirge.

[4] *First Epistle to Davie, a brother poet.*

Against such as reverse this natural equality Burns is pitiless; the least thing puts him out of temper. Read his 'Address of Beelzebub, to the Right Honourable the Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honourable and Honourable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last at the Shakspeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders, who, as the society were informed by Mr. Mackenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters, whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. M'Donald of Glengarry to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—liberty!' Rarely was an insult more prolonged and more biting, and the threat is not far behind. He warns Scottish members like a revolutionist: withdraw 'that curst restriction on aquavitae;' 'get auld Scotland back her kettle:'

'An', Lord, if ance they pit her till't
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt
I' the first she meets!' [1]

in vain, he writes, that

'In politics if thou wouldst mix
And mean thy fortunes be;
Bear this in mind, be deaf and blind,
Let great folks hear and see.' [2]

Not alone did he see and hear, but he also spoke, and that aloud. He congratulates the French on having repulsed conservative Europe, in arms against them. He celebrates the Tree of Liberty, planted 'where ance the Bastile stood;'

'Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,
Its virtues a' can tell, man;
It raises man aboon the brute,
It makes him ken himsel' man.
Gif ance the peasant taste a bit
He's greater than a Lord, man. . .
King Loui' thought to cut it down,
When it was unco sma', man.
For this the watchman cracked his crown.
Cut off head and a', man.' [3]

Strange gaiety, always savage and nervous, and which, in better style, resembles that of the *Ca ira*.

Burns is hardly more tender to the church. At that time the strait puritanical garment began to give way. Already the learned world

[1] *Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives.*
[2] *The Creed of Poverty;* Chambers' *Life*, iv. 86. [3] *The Tree of Liberty*

of Edinburgh had Frenchified, widened, adapted it to the fashions of society, decked it with ornaments, not very brilliant, it is true, but select. In the lower strata of society dogma became less rigid, and approached by degrees the looseness of Arminius and Socinus. John Goldie, a merchant, had quite recently discussed the authority of Scripture.[1] John Taylor had denied original sin. Burns' father, pious as he was, inclined to liberal and humane doctrines, and detracted from the province of faith to add to that of reason. Burns, after his wont, pushed things to an extreme, thought himself a deist, saw in the Saviour only an inspired man, reduced religion to an inner and poetic sentiment, and attacked with his railleries the paid and patented orthodox people. Since Voltaire, no one in religious matters was more bitter or more jocose. According to him, ministers are shopkeepers trying to cheat each other out of their customers, decrying at the top of their voice the shop next door, puffing their drugs on numberless posters, and here and there setting up fairs to push the trade. These 'holy fairs' are the gatherings of piety, where the sacrament is administered. Successively the clergymen preach and thunder, in particular a Rev. Mr. Moodie, who raves and fumes to throw light on points of faith—a terrible figure:

'Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie face
To's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.
Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'; . . .
He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
Oh! how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day!'[2]

The minister grows hoarse, and his audience take their ease; they begin to eat. Each brings cakes and cheese from his bag; the young folks have their arms round their lassies' waists. That was the attitude to listen in! There is a great noise in the inn; the cans rattle on the board; whisky flows, and provides arguments to the tipplers commenting on the sermon. They demolish carnal reason, and exalt free faith. Arguments and stamping, shouts of sellers and drinkers, all mingle together. It is a 'holy fair:'

'But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts;
Black Russell is na spairin';

[1] 1780. [2] *The Holy Fair.*

His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
Divide the joints and marrow.
His talk o' hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow
Wi' fright that day.

A vast unbottom'd boundless pit,
Fill'd fu' o' lowin' brunstane,
Wha's raging flame, an' scorchin' heat
Wad melt the hardest whunstane.
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear
'Twas but some neebor snorin'
Asleep that day. . . .

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fou o' love divine,
There's some are fou o' brandy.' [1]

The young men meet the girls, and the devil has done better business than God. A fine ceremony and morality! Let us cherish it carefully, and our wise theology too, which damns men.

As for that poor dog common sense, which bites so hard, let us send him across seas; let him go 'and bark in France.' For where shall we find better men than our 'unco guid'—Holy Willie for instance? He feels himself predestinated, full of never-failing grace; therefore all who resist him resist God, and are fit only to be punished; he may 'blast their name, who bring thy elders to disgrace, and public shame.' [2] Burns says also:

'An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge an' malice fause
He'll still disdain;
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws
Like some we ken. . . .

. I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colors hid be
Just for a screen.'

There is a beauty, an honesty, a happiness outside the conventionalities and hypocrisy, beyond correct preachings and the proper drawing-rooms, unconnected with gentlemen in white ties and reverends in new bands.

Now Burns wrote his masterpiece, the *Jolly Beggars*, like the *Gueux*

[1] *The Holy Fair.* [2] *Holy Willie's Prayer.*
[3] *Epistle to the Rev. John M'Math.*

of Béranger; but how much more picturesque, varied, and powerful! It is the end of autumn, the gray leaves float on the gusts of the wind; a joyous band of vagabonds, happy devils, come for a junketing at the change-house of Poosie Nansie:

'Wi' quaffing and laughing
They ranted and they sang;
Wi jumping and thumping
The very girdle rang.'

First, by the fire, in old red rags, is a soldier, and his old woman is with him; the jolly old girl has drunk freely; he kisses her, and she again pokes out her greedy lips; the coarse loud kisses smack like 'a cadger's whip.' 'Then staggering and swaggering, he roar'd this ditty up:'

'I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum. . . .
He ended; and the kebars sheuk,
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore.'

Now it is the 'doxy's' turn:

'I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men. . . .
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade. . . .
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church. . . .
Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got,
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie. . . .
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.'

I hope you think this a free style, and that the poet is not mealy-mouthed. His other characters are in the same taste, a Merry Andrew, a raucle carlin (a stout beldame), a 'pigmy-scraper wi' his fiddle,' a travelling tinker,—all in rags, brawlers and gipsies, who fight, bang, and kiss each other, and make the glasses ring with the noise of their good humour:

'They toomed their pocks, and pawned their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowin' drouth.'

And their chorus rolls about like thunder, shaking the rafters and walls.

'A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest!

What is title? What is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all cry out.—Amen.'

Has any one better spoken the language of rebels and levellers. There is here, however, something else than the instinct of destruction and the appeal to the senses; there is hatred of cant and return to nature. Burns sings:

'Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain;
Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
In moral mercy, truth and justice!'[1]

Mercy! this great word renews all: as, eighteen centuries ago, men passed beyond legal formulas and prescriptions; as, under Virgil and Marcus Aurelius, refined sensibility and wide sympathies embraced beings who seemed for ever banished out of the pale of society and law. Burns grows tender, and that sincerely, over a wounded hare, a mouse whose nest was upturned by his plough, a mountain daisy. Man, beast, or plant, is there so much difference? A mouse stores up, calculates, suffers like a man:

'I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live.'

We even no longer wish to curse the fallen angels, the grand malefactors, Satan and his troop; like the 'randie, gangrel bodies, who in Poosie Nancy's held the splore,' they have their good points, and perhaps after all are not so bad as people say:

[1] *A Dedication to Gavin Hamilton*

'Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel! . . .

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog
Ye came to Paradise incog.
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog,
'Maist ruin'd a'. . . .

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake.'[1]

We see that he speaks to the devil as to an unfortunate comrade, a quarrelsome fellow, but fallen into trouble. Another step, and you will see in a contemporary, Goethe, that Mephistopheles himself is not overmuch damned; his god, the modern god, tolerates him, and tells him that he has never hated such as he. For wide conciliating nature assembles in her company, on equal terms, the ministers of destruction and life. In this deep change the ideal changes; citizen and orderly life, strict Puritan duty, do not exhaust all the powers of man. Burns cries out in favour of instinct and joy, so as to seem epicurean. He has genuine gaiety, comic energy; laughter commends itself to him; he praises it and the good suppers of good comrades, where the wine flows, pleasantry abounds, ideas pour forth, poetry sparkles, and causes a carnival of beautiful figures and good-humoured people to move about in the human brain.

In love he always was.[2] He made love the great end of existence, to such a degree that at the club which he founded with the young men of Torbolton, every member was obliged 'to be the declared lover of one or more fair ones.' From the age of fifteen this was his main business. He had for companion in his harvest toil a sweet and lovable girl, a year younger than himself:

'In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below.'[3]

He sat beside her, with a joy which he did not understand, to 'pick

[1] *Address to the Deil.*

[2] He himself says: 'I have been all along a miserable dupe to Love.' His brother Gilbert said: 'He was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver.'

[3] Chambers' *Life of Burns*, i. 12.

out from her little hand the cruel nettle-stings and thistles.' He had many other less innocent fancies; it seems to me that he was at bottom in love with all women: as soon as he saw a pretty one, he grew gay; his commonplace-book and his songs show that he set off in pursuit after every butterfly, golden or not, which seemed about to settle. Observe that he did not confine himself to Platonic reveries; he was as free of action as of words; obscene jokes come freely in his verses. He calls himself an unregenerate heathen, and he is right. He has even written ribald verses; and Lord Byron refers to a packet of his letters, unedited of course, than which worse could not be imagined: it was the excess of the sap which overflowed in him, and soiled the bark. Doubtless he did not boast about these excesses, he rather repented of them; but as to the uprising and blooming of the free poetic life toward the open air, he found no fault with it. He thought that love, with the charming dreams it brings, poetry, pleasure, and the rest, are beautiful things, appropriate to human instincts, and therefore to the designs of God. In short, in contrast with morose Puritanism, he approved joy and spoke well of happiness.[1]

Not that he was a mere epicurean; on the contrary, he could be religious. When, after the death of his father, he prayed aloud in the evening, he drew tears from those present; and his *Cottar's Saturday Night* is the most feeling of virtuous idyls. I even believe he was fundamentally religious. He advised his 'pupil, as he tenders his own peace, to keep up a regular warm intercourse with the Deity.' Often, before Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh, he disapproved of the sceptical jokes which he heard at the supper table. He thought he had 'every evidence for the reality of a life beyond, the stinted bourne of our present existence;' and many a time, side by side with a jocose satire, we find in his writings stanzas full of humble repentance, confiding fervour, or Christian resignation. These, if you will, are a poet's contradictions, but they are also a poet's divinations; under these apparent variations there rises a new ideal; old narrow moralities are to give place to the wide sympathy of the modern man, who loves the beautiful wherever it meets him, and who, refusing to mutilate human nature, is at once Pagan and Christian.

This originality and divining instinct exist in his style as in his ideas. The specialty of the age in which we live, and which he inaugurated, is to blot out rigid distinctions of class, catechism, and style; academic, moral, or social conventions are falling away, and we claim in society dominion for individual merit, in morality for inborn generosity, in literature for genuine feeling. Burns was the first to enter on this track, and he often pursues it to the end. When he wrote verses, it was not on calculation or in obedience to the fashion:

[1] See a passage from Burns' common-place book in Chambers' *Life of Burns*, i. 92.

'My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet.'[1]

He hummed them, as he drove his plough, to old Scotch airs, which he passionately loved, and which, he says, as soon as he sang them, brought ideas and rhymes to his lips. That, indeed, was natural poetry; not forced in a hothouse, but born of the soil between the furrows, side by side with music, amidst the gloom and beauty of the climate, like the violet gorse of the hillside and wolds. We can understand that it gave vigour to his tongue: for the first time this man spoke as men speak, or rather as they think, without premeditation, with a mixture of all styles, familiar and terrible, hiding an emotion under a joke, tender and jeering in the same place, apt to combine taproom trivialities with the high language of poetry,[2] so indifferent was he to rules, content to exhibit his feeling as it came to him, and as he felt it. At last, after so many years, we escape from the measured declamation, we hear a man's voice! much better, we forget the voice in the emotion which it expresses, we feel this emotion reflected in ourselves, we enter into relations with a soul. Then form seems to fade away and disappear: I will say that this is the great feature of modern poetry; Burns has reached it seven or eight times.

He has done more; he has made his way, as we say now-a-days. On the publication of his first volume he became suddenly famous. Coming to Edinburgh, he was feasted, caressed, admitted on a footing of equality in the best drawing-rooms, amongst the great and the learned, loved of a woman who was almost a lady. For one season he was sought after, and he behaved worthily amidst these rich and noble people. He was respected, and even loved. A subscription brought him a second edition and five hundred pounds. He also at last had won his position, like the great French plebeians, amongst whom Rousseau was the first. Unfortunately he brought thither, like them, the vices of his condition and of his genius. A man does not rise with impunity, nor, above all, desire to rise with impunity: we also have our vices, and suffering vanity is the first of them. Nobody wished more anxiously than Burns to be distinguished This grievous pride marred his talent, and threw him into follies. He laboured to attain a fine epistolary style, and brought ridicule on himself by imitating in his letters the men of the academy and the court. He wrote to his loves with choice phrases, full of periods, as pedantic as those of Dr. Johnson. Certainly we dare hardly quote them, the emphasis is so grotesque.[3] At other times

[1] Chambers' *Life*, i. 38.

[2] See *Tam o' Shanter, Address to the Deil, The Jolly Beggars, A Man's a Man for a' that, Green grow the rushes*, etc.

[3] 'O Clarinda, shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of plenty shall minister to the highest wish of

he committed to his commonplace-book literary tirades that occurred to him, and six months afterwards sent them to his correspondents as extemporary effusions and natural improvisations. Even in his verses, often enough, he fell into a grand conventional style;[1] brought into play sighs, ardours, flames, even the big classical and mythological machinery. Béranger, who thought or called himself the poet of the people, did the same. A plebeian must have much courage to venture on always remaining himself, and never slipping on the court dress. Thus Burns, a Scottish villager, avoided, in speaking, all Scotch village expressions; he was pleased to show himself as well-bred as fashionable folks. It was forcibly and by surprise that his genius drew him out of these proprieties: twice out of three times his feeling was marred by his pretentiousness.

His success lasted one winter, after which the wide incurable wound of plebeianism made itself felt,—I mean that he was obliged to work for his living. With the money gained by his book he hired a little farm. It was a bad bargain; and, moreover, we can imagine that he had not the money-grubbing character necessary. He says:

'I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing; but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned obligation to make one guinea do the business of three, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business.'

Soon he left his farm, with empty pockets, to fill at Dumfries the small post of exciseman, which was worth, in all, £90 a year. In this fine employment he branded leather, gauged casks, tested the make of candles, issued licences for the carriage of spirits. From his dunghills he passed to office work and grocery: what a life for such a man! He would have been unhappy, even if independent and rich. These great innovators, these poets, are all alike. What makes them poets is the violent afflux of sensations. They have a nervous mechanism more sensitive than ours; the objects which leave us cool, transport them suddenly beyond themselves. At the least shock their brain is set going, after which they once more fall flat, loathe existence, sit morose amidst the memories of their faults and their last delights. Burns said:

'My worst enemy is *moi-même*. . . . There are just two creatures I would envy: a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear.'

He was always in extremes, at the height or at the depth; in the

benevolence, and where the chill north wind of prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of enjoyment?'

[1] *Epistle to James Smith:*

'O Life, how pleasant is thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning,
Cold pausing Caution's lesson spurning!'

morning, ready to weep; in the evening, at table or under the table; enamoured of Jean Armour, then on her refusal engaged to another, then returning to Jean, then quitting her, then taking her back, amidst much scandal, many blots on his character, still more disgust. In such heads ideas are like cannon balls: the man, hurled onwards, bursts through everything, shatters himself, begins again the next day, but in a contrary direction, and ends by finding nothing left, but ruins within and without him. Burns had never been prudent, and was so less than ever, after his success at Edinburgh. He had enjoyed too much; he henceforth felt too acutely the painful sting of modern man, to wit, the disproportion between desire and power. Debauch had all but spoiled his fine imagination, which had before been 'the chief source of his happiness;' and he confessed that, instead of tender reveries, he had now nothing but sensual desires. He had been kept drinking till six in the morning; he was very often drunk at Dumfries, not that the whisky was very good, but it raises a carnival in the head; and hence poets, like the poor, are fond of it. Once, at Mr. Riddell's, he made himself so tipsy that he insulted the lady of the house; next day he sent her an apology which was not accepted, and, out of spite, wrote rhymes against her: lamentable excess, betraying an unseated mind. At thirty-seven he was worn out. One night, having drunk too much, he sat down and went to sleep in the street. It was January, and he caught rheumatic fever. They wanted to call in a doctor. 'What business has a physician to waste his time on me?' he said; 'I am a poor pigeon not worth plucking.' He was horribly thin, could not sleep, and could not stand on his legs. 'As to my individual self, I am tranquil. But Burns' poor widow and half a dozen of his dear little ones, there I am as weak as a woman's tear.' He was even afraid he should not die in peace, and had the bitterness of being obliged to beg. Here is a letter he wrote to a friend:

'A rascal of a haberdasher, taking into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? Oh James! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas, I am not used to beg!'[1]

He died a few days afterwards, at thirty-eight. His wife was lying-in of her fifth child at the time of her husband's funeral.

II.

A sad life, most often the life of the men in advance of their age; it is not wholesome to go too quick. Burns was so much in advance, that it took forty years to catch him. At this moment in England, the Conservatives and the believers took the lead before sceptics and revolutionists. The constitution was liberal, and seemed to be a guarantee of rights; the church was popular, and seemed to be the support of morality.

[1] Chamber's *Life;* Letter to Mr. Js. Burns, iv. 205.

Practical capacity and speculative incapacity turned the mind aside from the propounded innovations, and bound them down to the established order. The people found themselves well off in their great feudal house, widened and accommodated to modern needs; they thought it beautiful, they were proud of it; and national instinct, like public opinion, declared against the innovators who would throw it down to build it up again. Suddenly a violent shock changed this instinct into a passion, and this opinion into fanaticism. The French Revolution, at first admired as a sister, had shown itself a fury and a monster. Pitt declared in Parliament, 'that one of the leading features of this (French) Government was the extinction of religion and the destruction of property.'[1] Amidst universal applause, the whole thinking and influential class rose to stamp out this party of robbers, united brigands, atheists on principle; and Jacobinism, sprung from blood to sit in purple, was persecuted even in its child and champion 'Buonaparte, who is now the sole organ of all that was formerly dangerous and pestiferous in the revolution.'[2] Under this national rage liberal ideas dwindled; the most illustrious friends of Fox—Burke, Windham, Spencer—abandoned him: out of a hundred and sixty partisans in the House of Commons, only fifty remained to him. The great Whig party seemed to be disappearing; and in 1799, the strongest minority that could be collected against the Government was twenty-nine. Yet English Jacobinism was taken by the throat and held down:

'The *Habeas Corpus* Act was repeatedly suspended. . . . Writers who propounded doctrines adverse to monarchy and aristocracy, were proscribed and punished without mercy. It was hardly safe for a republican to avow his political creed over his beefsteak and his bottle of port at a chophouse. . . . Men of cultivated mind and polished manners were (in Scotland), for offences which at Westminster would have been treated as mere misdemeanours, sent to herd with felons at Botany Bay.'[3]

But the intolerance of the nation aggravated that of the Government. If any one had dared to avow democratic sentiments, he would have been insulted. The papers represented the innovators as wretches and public enemies. The mob in Birmingham burned the houses of Priestley and the Unitarians. In the end Priestley was obliged to leave England. Lord Byron exiled himself under the same constraint; and when he left, his friends feared that the crowd round his carriage would have laid hands on him.

New theories could not arise in this society armed against new theories. Yet the revolution made its entrance; it entered disguised, and through a byway, so as not to be recognised. It was not social ideas, as in France, that were transformed, nor philosophical ideas, as in

[1] *The Speeches of William Pitt*, 2d ed. 3 vols., 1808. ii. 17, Jan. 21, 1794.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 152, Feb. 17, 1800.
[3] Macaulay's Works, *Life of William Pitt*, 396.

Germany, but literary ideas; the great rising tide of the modern mind, which elsewhere overturned the whole edifice of human conditions and speculations, succeeded here only at first in changing style and taste. It was a slight change, at least apparently, but on the whole of equal value with the others; for this renovation in the manner of writing is a renovation in the manner of thinking: the one led to all the rest, as the movement of a central pivot constrains the movement of all the indented wheels

Wherein consisted this reform of style? Before defining it, I prefer to exhibit it; and for that purpose, we must study the character and life of a man who was the first to use it, without any system—William Cowper: for his talent is but the picture of his character, and his poems but the echo of his life. He was a delicate, timid child, of a tremulous sensibility, passionately tender, who, having lost his mother at six, was almost at once subjected to the fagging and brutality of a public school. These, in England, are peculiar: a boy of about fifteen singled him out as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper; and the poor little fellow, ceaselessly ill-treated, 'conceived,' he says, 'such a dread of his (tormentor's) figure, . . . that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees; and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress.'[1] At the age of nine melancholy seized him, not the sweet reverie which we call by that name, but the profound dejection, gloomy and continual despair, the horrible malady of the nerves and the soul, which leads to suicide, Puritanism, and madness. 'Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair.'[2]

The evil changed form, diminished, but did not leave him. As he had only a small fortune, though born of a high family, he accepted, without reflection, the offer of his uncle, who wished to give him a place as clerk of the journals of the House of Lords; but he had to undergo an examination, and his nerves were unstrung at the very idea of having to speak in public. For six months he tried to prepare; but he read without understanding. His continual misery brought on at last a nervous fever. Cowper writes of himself:

'The feelings of a man when he arrives at the place of execution, are probably much like mine, every time I set my foot in the office, which was every day, for more than a half year together.'[3]

'In this situation, such a fit of passion has sometimes seized me, when alone in my chambers, that I have cried out aloud, and cursed the hour of my birth; lifting up my eyes to heaven not as a suppliant, but in the hellish spirit of rancorous reproach and blasphemy against my Maker.'[4]

The day of examination came on: he hoped he was going mad, so that he might escape from it; and as his reason held, he thought even of 'self-murder.' At last, whilst 'in a horrible dismay of soul,' insanity

[1] *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, 8 vols. 1843, i. 5.
[2] *Ibid.* 18. [3] *Ibid.* 79. [4] *Ibid.* 81.

came, and he was placed in an asylum, whilst 'his conscience was scaring him, and the avenger of blood pursuing him'[1] to the extent even of thinking himself damned, like Bunyan and the first Puritans. After several months his reason returned, but it bore traces of the strange lands where it had journeyed alone. He remained sad, like a man who thought himself in disfavour with God, and felt himself incapable of an active life. However, a clergyman, Mr. Unwin and his wife, very pious and very regular people, had taken charge of him. He tried to busy himself mechanically, for instance, in making rabbit-hutches, in gardening, and in taming hares. He employed the rest of the day like a Methodist, in reading Scripture or sermons, in singing hymns with his friends, and speaking of spiritual matters. This way of living, the wholesome country air, the maternal tenderness of Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austin, brought him a few gleams of light. They loved him so generously, and he was so lovable! Affectionate, full of freedom and innocent raillery, with a natural and charming imagination, a graceful fancy, an exquisite delicacy, and so unhappy! He was one of those to whom women devote themselves, whom they love maternally, first from compassion, then by attraction, because they find in them alone the contrivances, minute and tender attentions, delicate observances which men's rude nature cannot give them, and which their more sensitive nature nevertheless craves. These sweet moments, however, did not last. He says:

'My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless in a bright day reflect the sunbeams from their surface.'

He smiled as well as he could, but with effort; it was the smile of a sick man who knows himself incurable, and tries to forget it for an instant, at least to make others forget it:

'Indeed, I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellects, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state. His antic gesticulations would be unseasonable at any rate, but more specially so if they should distort the features of the mournful attendants into laughter. But the mind, long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix his eyes on any thing that may make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail.'[2]

In fine, he had too delicate and too pure a heart: pious, irreproachable, austere, he thought himself unworthy of going to church, or even of praying to God. He says also:

'As for happiness, he that once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet, if he can dream at finding it at a distance from Him.'[3]

[1] *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, i. 97.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 269; Letter to the Rev. John Newton, July 12, 1780.

[3] *Ibid.* i. 387; Letter to Rev. J. Newton, August 5, 1786.

Cowper states then:

'The heart of a Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing, (is) pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses. I have the thorn without the rose. My brier is a wintry one; the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains.'

On his deathbed, when the clergyman told him to confide in the love of the Redeemer, who desired to save all men, he gave a passionate cry, begging him not to give him such consolations. He thought himself lost, and had thought so all his life. One by one, under this terror, all his faculties failed. Poor charming soul, perishing like a frail flower transplanted from a warm land to the snow: the world's temperature was too rough for it; and the moral law, which should have supported it, tore it with its thorns.

Such a man does not write for the pleasure of making a noise. He made verses as he painted or planed, to occupy himself, to distract his mind. His soul was overcharged; he need not go far for subjects. Picture this pensive figure, silently wandering and gazing along the banks of the Ouse. He gazes and dreams. A buxom peasant girl, with a basket on her arm; a distant cart slowly rumbling on behind, horses in a sweat; a shining spring, which polishes the blue pebbles,—this is enough to fill him with sensations and thoughts. He returned, sat in his little summer-house, as large as a sedan-chair, the window of which opened out upon a neighbour's orchard, and the door on a garden full of pinks, roses, and honeysuckle. In this nest he laboured. In the evening, beside his friend, whose needles were working for him, he read, or listened to the drowsy sounds without. Rhymes are born in such a life as this. It sufficed for him, and for their birth. He did not need a more violent career: less harmonious or monotonous, it would have upset him; impressions small to us, were great to him; and in a room, a garden, he found a world. In his eyes the smallest objects were poetical. It is evening; winter; the postman comes:

'The herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some.'[1]

At last we have the precious 'close-packed load;' we open it; we wish to hear the many noisy voices it brings from London and the universe:

'Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,

[1] *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*.

> And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
> Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
> That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in.'[1]

Then he unfolds the whole contents of the newspaper—politics, news, even advertisements—not as a mere realist, like so many writers of to-day, but as a poet; that is, as a man who discovers a beauty and harmony in the coal of a sparkling fire, or the movement of fingers over a piece of wool-work; for such is the poet's strange distinction. Objects not only spring up in his mind more powerful and more precise than they were of themselves; but also, once conceived, they are purified, ennobled, coloured like gross vapours, which, being transfigured by distance and light, change into silky clouds, lined with purple and gold. For him there is a charm in the rolling folds of the vapour sent up by the tea-urn, sweetness in the concord of guests assembled about the same table in the same house. This one expression, 'News from India,' causes him to see India itself, 'with her plumed and jewelled turban.'[2] The mere notion of 'excise' sets before his eyes 'ten thousand casks, for ever dribbling out their base contents, touched by the Midas finger of the State, (which) bleed gold for ministers to sport away.'[3] Strictly, nature is like a gallery of splendid and various pictures, which to us ordinary folk are always covered up with cloths. At most, now and then, a rent suffers us to imagine the beauties hid behind the monotonous curtains; but these curtains the poet raises, one and all, and sees a picture where we see but a covering. Such is the new truth which Cowper's poems brought to light. We know from him that we need no longer go to Greece, Rome, to the palaces, heroes, and academicians, to search for poetic objects. They are quite near us. If we see them not, it is because we do not know how to look for them; the fault is in our eyes, not in the things. We shall find poetry, if we wish, at our fireside, and amongst the beds of our kitchen-garden.[4]

Is the kitchen-garden indeed poetical? To-day, perhaps; but to-morrow, if my imagination is barren, I shall see there nothing but carrots and other kitchen stuff. It is my sensation which is poetic, which I must respect, as the most precious flower of beauty. Hence a new style. It is no longer a question, after the old oratorical fashion, of boxing up a subject in a regular plan, dividing it into symmetrical portions, arranging ideas into files, like the pieces on a draught-board. Cowper takes the first subject that comes to hand—one which Lady Austin gave him at hap-hazard—the *Sofa*, and speaks about it for a couple of pages; then he goes whither the bent of his mind leads him,

[1] *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Crabbe may also be considered one of the masters and renovators of poetry, but his style is too classical, and he has been rightly nicknamed 'a Pope in worsted stockings.'

describing a winter evening, a number of interiors and landscapes, mingling here and there all kinds of moral reflections, stories, dissertations, opinions, confidences, like a man who thinks aloud before the most intimate and beloved of his friends. 'The best didactic poems,' says Southey, 'when compared with the *Task*, are like formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery.'[1] This is his great poem, the *Task*. If we enter into details, the contrast is greater still. He does not seem to dream that he is being listened to; he only speaks to himself. He does not dwell on his ideas, to set them in relief, and make them stand out by repetitions and antitheses; he marks his sensation, and that is all. We follow it in him as it is born, and we see it rising from a former one, swelling, falling, remounting, as we see vapour issuing from a spring, and insensibly rising, unrolling, and developing its shifting forms. Thought, which in others was curdled and rigid, becomes here mobile and fluent; the rectilinear verse grows flexible; the noble vocabulary widens its scope to let in vulgar words of conversation and life. At length poetry has again become lifelike; we no longer listen to words, but we feel emotions; it is no longer an author, but a man who speaks. His life is there perfect, beneath its black lines, without falsehood or concoction; his whole effort is bent on removing falsehood and concoction. When he describes his little river, his dear Ouse, 'slow winding through a level plain of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,'[2] he sees it with his inner eye; and each word, cæsura, sound, answers to a change of that inner vision. It is so in all his verses; they are full of personal emotions, genuinely felt, never altered or disguised; on the contrary, fully expressed, with their transient shades and fluctuations; in a word, as they are, that is, in the process of production and destruction, not all complete, motionless, and fixed, as the old style represented them. Herein consists the great revolution of the modern style. The mind, outstripping the known rules of rhetoric and eloquence, penetrates into profound psychology, and no longer employs words except to mark emotions.

III.

Now[3] appeared the English romantic school, closely resembling the French in its doctrines, origin, and alliances, in the truths which it discovered, the exaggerations it committed, and the scandal it excited. The followers of that school formed a sect, a sect of 'dissenters in poetry,' who spoke out aloud, kept themselves close together, and repelled settled minds by the audacity and novelty of their theories. For their foundation were attributed to them the anti-social principles and the sickly sensibility of Rousseau; in short, a sterile and misanthropical dissatisfaction with the present institutions of society. In fact, Southey, one of their leaders, had begun by being a Socinian and Jacobin; and one of his

[1] Southey, *Life of Cowper*, i. 341.
[2] *The Task*, i.; *The Sofa*.
[3] 1793-1794.

first poems, *Wat Tyler*, cited the glory of the past Jacquerie in support of the present revolution. Another, Coleridge, a poor fellow, who had served as a dragoon, his brain stuffed with incoherent reading and humanitarian dreams, had thought of founding in America a communist republic, purged of kings and priests; then, having turned Unitarian, steeped himself at Göttingen in heretical and mystical theories on the Word and the absolute. Wordsworth himself, the third and most moderate, had begun with enthusiastic verses against kings:

> 'Great God, . . . grant that every sceptred child of clay,
> Who cries presumptuous, "Here the flood shall stay,"
> May in its progress see thy guiding hand.
> And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand;
> Or, swept in anger from the insulted shore,
> Sink with his servile bands, to rise no more!' [1]

But these rages and aspirations did not last long; and at the end of a few years, the three, brought back into the pale of State and Church, were, Coleridge, a Pittite journalist, Wordsworth, a distributor of stamps, and Southey, poet-laureate; all converted zealots, decided Anglicans, and intolerant Conservatives. In point of taste, however, they had advanced, not retired. They had violently broken with tradition, and leaped over all classical culture to find their models from the Renaissance and the middle-age. One of their friends, Charles Lamb, like Sainte-Beuve, had discovered and restored the sixteenth century. The most unpolished dramatists, like Marlowe, seemed to these men admirable; and they sought in the collections of Percy and Warton, in the old national ballads and ancient foreign poetry, the fresh and primitive accent which had been wanting in classical literature, and whose presence seemed to them to be a sign of truth and beauty. Above every other reform, they labored to destroy the great aristocratical and oratorical style, such as it sprang from methodical analyses and court conventions, to adapt to poetry the ordinary language of conversation, such as is spoken in the middle and lower classes. They proposed to replace studied phrases and lofty vocabulary by natural tones and plebeian words. In place of the ancient mould, they tried the stanza, the sonnet, the ballad, blank verse, with the rudenesses and breaks of the primitive poets. They resumed or arranged the metres and diction of the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Charles Lamb wrote an archaic tragedy, *John Woodvill*, which one might fancy contemporary with Elizabeth's reign. Others, like Southey, and Coleridge in particular, manufactured totally new rhythms, as happy at times, and at times also as unfortunate, as those of Victor Hugo: for instance, a verse in which accents, and not syllables, were counted; [2] a singular medley of confused attempts, mani-

[1] Wordsworth's Works, new edition, 1870, 6 volumes; *Descriptive Sketches during a Pedestrian Tour*, i. 42.

[2] In English poetry as since modified, no one dreams of limiting the number of syllables, even in blank verse.—Tr.

fest abortions, and original inventions. The plebeian, enfranchised from the aristocratical costume, sought another; borrowed one piece of his dress from the knights or the barbarians, another from peasants or journalists, not too critical of incongruities, pretentious, and satisfied with his motley and badly sewn cloak, till at last, after many attempts and many rents, he ended by knowing himself, and selecting the dress that fitted him.

In this confusion of labours two great ideas are distinguished: the first producing historical poetry, the second philosophical; the one especially manifest in Southey and Walter Scott, the other in Wordsworth and Shelley; both European, and displayed with equal brilliancy in France by Hugo, Lamartine, and Musset; with greater brilliancy in Germany by Goethe, Schiller, Ruckert, and Heine; both so profound, that none of their representatives, except Goethe, divined their scope; and hardly now, after more than half a century, can we define their nature, so as to forecast their results.

The first consists in saying, or rather foreboding, that our ideal is not the ideal; it is one ideal, but there are others. The barbarian, the feudal man, the cavalier of the Renaissance, the Mussulman, the Indian, each age and each race has conceived its beauty, which was a beauty. Let us enjoy it, and for this purpose put ourselves in the place of the discoverers; altogether; for it will not suffice to represent, like the previous novelists and dramatists, modern and national manners under old and foreign names; let us paint the sentiments of other ages and other races with their own features, however different these features may be from our own, and however unpleasing to our taste. Let us show our character as he was, grotesque or not, with his costume and speech: let him be fierce and superstitious if he was so; let us dash the barbarian with blood, and load the covenanter with his bundle of biblical texts. Then one by one on the literary stage men saw the vanished or distant civilisations return: first the middle age and the Renaissance; then Arabia, Hindostan, and Persia; then the classical age, and the eighteenth century itself; and the historic taste becomes so eager, that from literature the contagion spread to other arts. The theatre changed its conventional costumes and decorations into true ones. Architecture built Roman villas in our northern climates, and feudal towers amidst our modern security. Painters travelled to imitate local colouring, and studied to reproduce moral colouring. Every one became a tourist and an archæologist; the human mind, quitting its individual sentiments to adopt sentiments really felt, and finally all possible sentiments, found its pattern in the great Goethe, who by his *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Divan*, his second part of *Faust*, became a citizen of all nations and a contemporary of all ages, seemed to live at pleasure at every point of time and place, and gave an idea of universal mind. Yet this literature, as it approached perfection, approached its limit, and was only developed in order to die. Men did comprehend at last that

attempted resurrections are always incomplete, that every imitation is only an imitation, that the modern accent infallibly penetrates the words which we lend to antique characters, that every picture of manners must be indigenous and contemporaneous, and that archaic literature is a false kind. They saw at last that it is in the writers of the past that we must seek the portraiture of the past; that there are no Greek tragedies but the Greek tragedies; that the concocted novel must give place to authentic memoirs, as the fabricated ballad to the spontaneous; in short, that historical literature must vanish and become transformed into criticism and history, that is, into exposition and commentary of documents.

In this multitude of travellers and historians, disguised as poets, how shall we select? They abound like swarms of insects, hatched on a summer's day amidst the rank vegetation; they buzz and glitter, and the mind is lost in their sparkle and hum. Which shall I quote? Thomas Moore, the gayest and most French of all, a witty railer,[1] too graceful and *recherché*, writing descriptive odes on the Bermudas, sentimental Irish melodies, a poetic Egyptian romance,[2] a romantic poem on Persia and India;[3] Lamb, the restorer of the old drama; Coleridge, a thinker and dreamer, poet and critic, who in *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* hit the supernatural and the fantastic; Campbell, who, having begun with a didactic poem on the *Pleasures of Hope*, entered the new school without giving up his noble and half-classical style, and wrote American and Celtic poems, only slightly Celtic and American; in the first rank, Southey, a clever man, who, after several mistakes in his youth, became the professed defender of aristocracy and cant, an indefatigable reader, an inexhaustible writer, crammed with erudition, gifted in imagination, famed like Victor Hugo for the freshness of his innovations, the combative tone of his prefaces, the splendours of his picturesque curiosity, having spanned the universe and all history with his poetic shows, and embraced, in the endless web of his verse, Joan of Arc, Wat Tyler, Roderick the Goth, Madoc, Thalaba, Kehama, Celtic and Mexican traditions, Arabic and Indian legends, successively Catholic, Mussulman, Brahman, but only in verse; in fine, a prudent and licensed Protestant. You must receive these as examples merely—there are thirty others behind; and I think that, of all fine visible or imaginable sceneries, of all great real or legendary events, at all points of time, in the four quarters of the world, not one has escaped them. This diorama is very brilliant; unfortunately we perceive that it is manufactured. If you would have its picture, imagine yourself at the opera. The decorations are splendid, we see them coming down from heaven, that is, from the ceiling, thrice in an act; lofty Gothic cathedrals, whose rose-windows glow in the rays of the setting sun, whilst processions wind round the pillars, and the

[1] See *The Fudge Family* [2] *The Epicurean.* [3] *Lalla Rookh.*

lights float over the elaborate copes and the gold-work of the priestly vestments; mosques and minarets, moving caravans creeping afar over the yellow sand, whose lances and canopies, ranged in line, fringe the immaculate whiteness of the horizon; Indian paradises, where the heaped roses multiply in myriads, where fountains mingle their plumes of pearls, where the lotus spreads its large leaves, where thorny plants bristle their hundred thousand purple calices around the divine apes and crocodiles which crawl in their thickets. Meantime the dancing-girls lay their hands on their heart with deep and delicate emotion, the tenors sing that they are ready to die, tyrants roll forth their deep bass voice, the orchestra struggles hard, accompanying the variations of sentiments with the gentle sounds of their flutes, the lugubrious clamours of the trombones, the angelic melodies of the harps; till at last, when the heroine sets her foot on the throat of the traitor, it breaks out triumphantly with its thousand vibrant voices harmonised into a single strain. A fine spectacle! we depart mazed, deafened; the senses fail under this inundation of splendours; but as we return home, we ask ourselves what we have learnt, felt—whether we have, in truth, felt anything. After all, there is little here but decorations and scenery; the sentiments are factitious; they are operatic sentiments: the authors are only clever men, libretti-makers, manufacturers of painted canvas; they have talent without genius; they draw their ideas not from the heart, but from the head. Such is the impression left by *Lalla Rookh*, *Thalaba*, *Roderick the last of the Goths*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and the rest of these poems. They are great decorative machines suited to the fashion. The mark of genius is the discovery of some wide unexplored region in human nature, and this mark fails them; they prove only much cleverness and knowledge. In fine, I prefer to see the East in Orientals from the East, rather than in Orientals in England; in Vyasa or Firdousi, rather than in Southey[1] and Moore. These poems may be descriptive or historical; they are less so than the texts, notes, emendations, and justifications which they carefully print at the foot of the page.

Beyond all general causes which have fettered this literature, there is a national one: the mind of these authors is not sufficiently flexible, and too moral. Their imitation is only literal. They know the past time and the distant lands only as antiquarians and travellers. When they mention a custom, they put their authorities in a foot-note; they do not present themselves before the public without being furnished with testimonials; they establish by weighty certificates that they have not made a fault in topography or costume. Moore, like Southey, named his authorities; Sir John Malcolm, Sir William Ouseley, Mr. Carew, and others, who had returned from the East, all ocular witnesses, state

[1] See also *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, a fantastic but powerfully written tale, by W. Beckford, published first in French in 1784.

that his descriptions are wonderfully faithful, that they thought that Moore had travelled in the East. In this respect their minuteness is ridiculous;[1] and their notes, lavished without stint, show that their positive public imposed on the poetical commodities the necessity of proving their origin and alloy. But the great truth, which lies in the penetration into the sentiments of the characters, escaped them; these sentiments are too strange and immoral. When Moore tried to translate and recast Anacreon, he was told that his poetry was fit for 'the stews.'[2] To write an Indian poem, we must be pantheistical at heart, a little mad, and pretty generally visionary: to write a Greek poem, we must be polytheistic at heart, fundamentally pagan, and a naturalist by profession. This is the reason that Heine spoke so fitly of India, and Goethe of Greece. A genuine historian is not sure that his own civilisation is perfect, and lives as gladly out of his country as in it. Judge whether Englishmen can succeed in this style. In their eyes, there is only one rational civilisation, which is their own; every other morality is inferior, every other religion is extravagant. Amidst such want of reason, how can they reproduce different moralities and religions? Sympathy alone can restore extinguished or foreign manners, and sympathy here is forbidden. Under this narrow rule, historical poetry, which itself is hardly likely to live, languishes as though suffocated under a leaden cover.

One of them, a novelist, critic, historian, and poet, the favourite of his age, read over the whole of Europe, was compared and almost equalled to Shakspeare, had more popularity than Voltaire, made dressmakers and duchesses weep, and earned about two hundred thousand pounds. Murray, the publisher, wrote to him: 'I believe I might swear that I never experienced such unmixed pleasure as the reading of this exquisite work (first series of *Tales of my Landlord*) has afforded me. . . . Lord Holland said, when I asked his opinion: "Opinion! we did none of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout."'[3] In France, 1,400,000 of these novels were sold, and they continue to sell. The author, born in Edinburgh, was the son of a Writer to the Signet, learned in feudal law and ecclesiastical history, himself an advocate, then sheriff, and always fond of antiquities, especially national antiquities; so that by his family, education, person he found the materials of his works and the stimulus for his talent. His past recollections were impressed on him at the age of three, in a farm-house, where he had been taken to try the effect of bracing air on his little shrunken leg. He was wrapt naked in the warm skin of a recently slain sheep, and he crept about in this attire, which passed for a specific. He continued to limp, and became a reader. From his infancy he had been bred amongst the stories which he afterwards gave

[1] See the notes of Southey, worse than those of Chateaubriand in the *Martyrs*.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*.

[3] Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 10 vols., 2d ed., 1839, ii. ch. xxxvii. p. 170.

to the public,—that of the battle of Culloden, of the cruelties practised on the Highlanders, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters. At three he used to sing out the ballad of Hardyknute so loudly, that he prevented the village minister, a man gifted with a very fine voice, from being heard, and even from hearing himself. As soon as he had heard 'a Border-raid ballad,' he knew it by heart. For the rest, he was indolent, studied by fits and starts, did not readily learn dry hard facts; but for poetry, playhouse-ditties, and ballads, the flow of his genius was precocious, swift, and invincible. The day on which he first opened, 'under a platanus tree,' the volumes in which Percy had collected the fragments of the ancient poetry, he forgot dinner, 'notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen,' and thenceforth he flooded with these old rhymes not only his schoolfellows, but even all who would hear him. Becoming a clerk to his father, he stuffed into his desk all the works of imagination which he could find. 'The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred,' he said, 'and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic, . . . that touched upon knight-errantry, I devoured.'[1] Having contracted an illness, he was kept a long time in bed, forbidden to speak, with no other pleasure than to read the poets, novelists, historians, and geographers, illustrating the battle-descriptions by setting in line and disposing little pebbles, which represented the soldiers. Once cured, and able to walk well, he turned his walks to the same purpose, and developed a passion for the country, especially the historical regions. He said:

'But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St. Andrews to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep.'[2]

Amidst other studious excursions, he travelled for seven years successively in the wild district of Liddesdale, exploring every stream and every ruin, sleeping in the shepherds' huts, gleaning legends and ballads. Judge from this of his antiquarian tastes and habits. He read provincial charters, the wretched middle-age Latin verses, the parish registers, even contracts and wills. The first time he was able to lay his hand on one of the great 'old Border war-horns,' he blew it all along his route. Rusty mail and dirty parchment attracted him, filled his head with recollections and poetry. In truth, he had a feudal mind, and always wished to be the founder of a distinct branch. Literary glory was only secondary; his talent was to him only as an instrument. He spent the vast sums which his prose

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Sir W. Scott;* Autobiography, i. 62. [2] *Ibid.* i. 72

and verse had won, in building a castle in imitation of the ancient knights, 'with a tall tower at either end, . . . sundry zigzagged gables, . . . a myriad of indentations and parapets, and machicollated eaves; most fantastic waterspouts; labelled windows, not a few of them painted glass; . . . stones carved with heraldries innumerable;'[1] apartments filled with sideboards and carved chests, adorned with 'cuirasses, helmets, swords of every order, from the claymore and rapier to some German executioner's swords.' For long years he held open house there, so to speak, and did to every stranger the 'honours of Scotland,' trying to revive the old feudal life, with all its customs and its display; dispensing open and joyous hospitality to all comers, above all to relatives, friends, and neighbours; singing ballads and sounding pibrochs amidst the clinking of glasses; holding gay hunting-parties, where the yeomen and gentlemen rode side by side; and encouraging lively dances, where the lord was not ashamed to give his hand to the miller's daughter. He himself, open, happy, amidst his forty guests, kept up the conversation with a profusion of stories, lavished from his vast memory and imagination, conducted his guests over his domain, extended at large cost, amidst new plantations whose future shade was to shelter his posterity; and he thought with a poet's smile of the distant generations who would acknowledge for ancestor Sir Walter Scott, first baronet of Abbotsford.

The Lady of the Lake, *Marmion*, *The Lord of the Isles*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, *Old Mortality*, *Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*, who does not know these names by heart? From Walter Scott we learned history. And yet is this history? All these pictures of a distant age are false. Costumes, scenery, externals alone are exact; actions, speech, sentiments, all the rest is civilised, embellished, arranged in modern guise. We might suspect it when looking at the character and life of the author; for what does he desire, and what do the guests, eager to hear him, demand? Is he a lover of truth as it is, foul and fierce; an inquisitive explorer, indifferent to contemporary applause, bent alone on defining the transformations of living nature? By no means. He is in history, as he is at Abbotsford, bent on arranging points of view and Gothic halls. The moon will come in well there between the towers; here is a nicely placed breastplate, the ray of light which it throws back is pleasant to see above these old hangings; suppose we took out the feudal garments from the wardrobe and invited the guests to a masquerade? The entertainment would be a fine one, agreeable with their reminiscences and their aristocratic principles. English lords, fresh from a bitter war against French democracy, ought to enter zealously into this commemoration of their ancestors. Moreover, there are ladies and young girls, and we must arrange the show, so as not to shock their severe morality and their delicate feelings, make them weep

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Sir W. Scott*, vii.; Abbotsford in 1825.

becomingly; not put on the stage over-strong passions, which they would not understand; on the contrary, select heroines to resemble them, always touching, but above all correct; young gentlemen, Evandale, Morton, Ivanhoe, irreproachably brought up, tender and grave, even slightly melancholic (it is the latest fashion), and worthy to lead them to the altar. Is there a man more suited than the author to compose such a spectacle? He is a good Protestant, a good husband, a good father, very moral, so decided a Tory, that he carries off as a relic a glass from which the king has just drunk. In addition, he has neither talent nor leisure to reach the depth of his characters. He devotes himself to the exterior; he sees and describes forms and externals much more at length than feelings and internals. Again, he treats his mind like a coal-mine, serviceable for quick working, and for the greatest possible gain: a volume in a month, sometimes in a fortnight even, and this volume is worth one thousand pounds. How should he discover, or how dare exhibit, the structure of barbarous souls? This structure is too difficult to discover, and too little pleasing to show. Every two centuries, amongst men, the proportion of images and ideas, the source of passions, the degree of reflection, the species of inclinations, change. Who, without a long preliminary training, now understands and relishes Dante, Rabelais, and Rubens? And how, for instance, could these great Catholic and mystical dreams, these vast temerities, or these impurities of carnal art, find entrance into the head of this gentlemanly citizen? Walter Scott pauses on the threshold of the soul, and in the vestibule of history, selects in the Renaissance and the Middle-age only the fit and agreeable, blots out frank language, licentious sensuality, bestial ferocity. After all, his characters, to whatever age he transports them, are his neighbours, 'cannie' farmers, vain lairds, gloved gentlemen, young marriageable ladies, all more or less commonplace, that is, well-ordered by education and character, hundreds of miles away from the voluptuous fools of the Restoration, or the heroic brutes and fierce beasts of the Middle-age. As he has the richest supply of costumes, and the most inexhaustible talent for scenic effect, he makes his whole world get on very pleasantly, and composes tales which, in truth, have only the merit of fashion, but which yet may last a hundred years.

That which he himself acted lasted for a briefer time. To sustain his princely hospitality and his feudal magnificence, he had gone into partnership with his printers; lord of the manor in public and merchant in private, he had given them his signature, without keeping a check over the use they made of it. Bankruptcy followed; at the age of fifty-five he was ruined, and one hundred and seventeen thousand pounds in debt. With admirable courage and uprightness, he refused all favour, accepting nothing but time, set to work on the very day, wrote untiringly, in four years paid seventy thousand pounds, exhausted his brain so as to become paralytic, and to perish in the attempt

Neither in his conduct nor his literature did his feudal tastes succeed, and his manorial splendour was as fragile as his Gothic imaginations. He had relied on imitation, and we live by truth only; his glory lay elsewhere; and there was something solid in his mind as in his writings. Beneath the lover of the Middle-age we find, first the prudent Scotchman, an attentive observer, whose sharpness has become more intense by his familiarity with law; a good man too, easy and gay, as beseems the national character, so different from the English. One of his walking companions (Shortreed) said:

'Eh me, sic an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he had wi' him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man, or took ony airs in the company.'[1]

Grown older and graver, he was none the less amiable; the most agreeable of hosts, so that one of his guests, a farmer, I think, on leaving his house, said to his wife, that he was going to bed, and should like to sleep for a whole twelve months, for that there was only one thing in this world worth living for, namely, hunting at Abbotsford.

In addition to a mind of this kind, he had all-discerning eyes, an all-retentive memory, a ceaseless studiousness which comprehended the whole of Scotland, all conditions; and you see his true talent arise, so abundant and so easy, made up of minute observation and sweet raillery, recalling at once Teniers and Addison. Doubtless he wrote badly, at times in the worst possible manner:[2] it is clear that he dictated, hardly re-read his writing, and readily fell into a pasty and emphatic style,—a style indigenous to the atmosphere, and which we read day after day in prospectuses and newspapers. What is worse, he is terribly long and diffuse; his conversations and descriptions are interminable; he is determined, at all events, to fill three volumes. But he has given to Scotland a citizenship of literature—I mean to Scotland altogether: scenery, monuments, houses, cottages, characters of every age and condition, from the baron to the fisherman, from the advocate to the beggar, from the lady to the fishwife. At his name alone they crowd forward; who does not see them coming from every niche of memory? The Baron of Bradwardine, Dominie Sampson, Meg Merrilies, the Antiquary, Edie Ochiltree, Jeanie Deans and her father,—innkeepers, shopkeepers, old wives, an entire people. What Scotch features are absent? Saving, patient, 'cannie,' cunning, necessarily; the poverty

[1] Lockhart's *Life*, i. ch. vii. 269.

[2] See the opening of *Ivanhoe:* 'Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I., when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression.' It is impossible to write in a heavier style

of the soil and the difficulty of existence has compelled them to it: this is the specialty of the race. The same tenacity which they introduced into everyday affairs they have introduced into mental concerns, —studious readers and perusers of antiquities and controversies, poets also: legends spring up readily in a romantic land, amidst time-honoured wars and brigandism. In a land thus prepared, and in this gloomy clime, Presbyterianism fixed its sharp roots. Such was the real and modern world, enlightened by the far-setting sun of chivalry, as Sir Walter Scott found it; like a painter who, passing from great show-pictures, finds interest and beauty in the shops of a paltry provincial town, or in a farm surrounded by beds of beetroots and turnips. A continuous archness throws its smile over these pictures of interiors and of peculiarities, so local and minute, which, like the Flemish, indicate the rise of a bourgeoisie. Most of these good folk are comic. Our author makes fun of them, brings out their little deceits, parsimony, fooleries, vulgarity, and the hundred thousand circumstances of ridicule with which their narrow sphere of life never fails to endow them. A barber, in *The Antiquary*, makes heaven and earth turn about his wigs; if the French Revolution takes root everywhere, it was because the magistrates renounced this ornament. He cries out in a lamentable voice:

'Haud a care, haud a care, Monkbarns; God's sake, haud a care!—Sir Arthur's drowned already, and an' ye fa' over the cleugh too, there will be but ae wig left in the parish, and that's the minister's.'[1]

Mark how the author smiles, and without malevolence: the barber's candid selfishness is the effect of the man's calling, and does not repel us. Walter Scott is never bitter; he loves men from the bottom of his heart, excuses or tolerates them; does not chastise vices, but unmasks them, and that not rudely. His greatest pleasure is to pursue at length, not indeed a vice, but a hobby; the mania for odds and ends in an antiquary, the archæological vanity of the Baron of Bradwardine, the aristocratic drivel of the Dowager Lady Tillietudlem,—that is the amusing exaggeration of sane permissible taste; and this without anger, because, on the whole, these ridiculous people are estimable, and even generous. Even in rogues like Dirck Hatteraick, in cut-throats like Bothwell, he allows some goodness. In no one, not even Major Dalgetty, a professional murderer, a production of the thirty years' war, is the odious unveiled by the ridiculous. In this critical refinement and this benevolent philosophy, he resembles Addison.

He resembles him again by the purity and endurance of his moral principles. His assistant, Mr. Laidlaw, told him that he was doing great good by his attractive and noble tales, and that young people would no longer wish to look in the literary rubbish of the circulating libraries. When Walter Scott heard this, his eyes filled with tears:

'On his deathbed he said to his son-in-law: "Lockhart, I may have but a

[1] Sir Walter Scott's Works, 48 vols., 1829; *The Antiquary*, ch. viii.

minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous, be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."[1]

This was almost his last word. By this fundamental honesty and this wide humanity, he was the Homer of modern citizen life. Around and after him, the novel of manners, separated from the historical romance, has produced a whole literature, and preserved the character which he stamped upon it. Miss Austin, Miss Brontë, Mistress Gaskell, George Eliot, Bulwer, Thackeray, Dickens, and many others, paint, especially or entirely in his style, contemporary life, as it is, unembellished, in all ranks, often amongst the people, more frequently still amongst the middle class. And the causes which made the historical novel come to naught, in him and others, made the novel of manners, in him and others, succeed. These men were too minute copyists and too decided moralists, incapable of the great divinations and the wide sympathies which unlock the door of history; their imagination was too literal, and their judgment too decided. It is precisely by these faculties that they created a new species of novel, which multiplies to this day in thousands of offshoots, with such abundance, that men of talent in this respect may be counted by hundreds, and that we can only compare them, for their original and national sap, to the great age of Dutch painting. Realistic and moral, these are their two features. They are far removed from the great imagination which creates and transforms, as it appeared in the Renaissance or in the seventeenth century, in the heroic or noble ages. They renounce free invention; they narrow themselves to scrupulous exactitude; they paint with infinite detail costumes and places, changing nothing; they mark little shades of language; they are not disgusted by vulgarities or platitudes. Their information is authentic and precise. In short, they write like citizens for fellow-citizens, that is, for well-ordered people, members of a profession, whose imagination looks upon the earth, and sees things through a magnifying glass, unable to relish anything in the way of a picture except interiors and make-believes. Ask a cook which picture she prefers in the Museum, and she will point to a kitchen, in which the stewpans are so well painted that one is tempted to mix the soup in them. Yet beyond this inclination, which is now European, Englishmen have a special craving, which with them is national, and dates from the preceding century: they desire that the novel, like the rest, should contribute to their great work,—the amelioration of man and society. They ask from it the glorification of virtue, and the chastisement of vice. They send it into all the corners of civil society, and all the events of private history, in search of documents and expedients, to learn thence the means of remedying abuses, succouring miseries, avoiding temptations. They make of it an instrument of inquiry, education, and morality. A singular work, which has not its equal in

[1] Lockhart's *Life*, x. 217.

all history, because in all history there has been no society like it, and which—middling to lovers of the beautiful, admirable to lovers of the useful—offers, in the countless variety of its painting, and the invariable fixity of its spirit, the picture of the only democracy which knows how to restrain, govern, and reform itself.

IV.

Side by side with this development there was another, and with history philosophy entered into literature, in order to widen and modify it. It was manifest throughout, on the threshold as in the centre. On the threshold it had planted æsthetics: every poet, becoming theoretic, defined before producing the beautiful, laid down principles in his preface, and originated only after a preconceived system. But the ascendency of metaphysics was much more visible in the middle of the work than on its threshold; for not only did it prescribe the form of poetry, but it furnished it with its elements. What is man, and what has he come into the world to do? What is this far-off greatness to which he aspires? Is there a haven which he may reach, and a hidden hand to conduct him thither? These are the questions which poets, transformed into thinkers, agreed to agitate; and Goethe, here as elsewhere the father and promoter of all lofty modern ideas, at once sceptical, pantheistic, and mystic, wrote in *Faust* the epic of the age and the history of the human mind. Need I say that in Schiller, Heine, Beethoven, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and de Musset, the poet, in his individual person, always speaks the words of the universal man? The characters which they have created, from *Faust* to *Ruy Blas*, only served them to exhibit some great metaphysical and social idea; and twenty times this too great idea, bursting its narrow envelope, broke out beyond all human likelihood and all poetic form, to display itself to the eyes of the spectators. Such was the domination of the philosophical spirit, that, after doing violence to literature, or rendering it rigid, it imposed on music humanitarian ideas, inflicted on painting symbolical designs, penetrated current speech, and marred style by an overflow of abstractions and formulas, from which all our efforts now fail to liberate us. As an overstrong child, which at its birth injures its mother, so it has contorted the noble forms which had endeavoured to contain it, and dragged literature through an agony of anguish and of efforts.

This philosophical spirit was not born in England, and from Germany to England the passage was very long. For a considerable time it appeared dangerous or ridiculous. One of the reviews stated even, that Germany was a large country peopled by hussars and classical scholars; that if folks go there, they will see at Heidelberg a very large tun, and could feast on excellent Rhine wine and Westphalian ham, but that their authors were very heavy and awkward, and that a sentimental German resembles a tall and stout butcher crying over a killed calf. If at length German literature found entrance, first by the

attractiveness of extravagant dramas and fantastic ballads, then by the sympathy of the two nations, which, allied against French policy and civilisation, acknowledged their cousinship in speech, religion, and blood, the German metaphysician stood at the door, unable to overturn the barrier which the positive mind and the national literature opposed to him. He was seen trying to pass, in Coleridge for instance, a philosophic theologian and dreamy poet, who toiled to widen conventional dogma, and who, at the close of his life, having become a sort of oracle, endeavoured, in the pale of the Church, to unfold and unveil before a few faithful disciples the Christianity of the future. It did not make head; the English mind was too positive, the theologians too enslaved. It was constrained to transform itself and become Anglican, or to deform itself and become revolutionary; and, in place of a Schiller and Goethe, to produce a Wordsworth, a Byron, a Shelley.

The first, a new Cowper, with less talent and more ideas than the other, was essentially an interior man, that is, engrossed by the concerns of the soul. Such men ask what they have come to do in this world, and why life has been given to them; if they are just or unjust, and if the secret movements of their heart are conformable to the supreme law, without taking into account the visible causes of their conduct. Such, for men of this kind, is the master conception which renders them serious, meditative, and as a rule gloomy.[1] They live with eyes turned inwards, not to mark and classify their ideas, like physiologists, but as moralists, to approve or blame their feelings. Thus understood, life becomes a grave business, of uncertain issue, on which we must incessantly and scrupulously reflect. Thus understood, the world changes its aspect; it is no longer a machine of wheels working in each other, as the philosopher says, nor a splendid blooming plant, as the artist feels,—it is the work of a moral being, displayed as a spectacle to moral beings.

Figure such a man facing life and the world; he sees them, and takes part in it, apparently like any one else; but how different he is in reality! His great thought pursues him; and when he beholds a tree, it is to meditate on human destiny. He finds or lends a sense to the least objects: a soldier marching to the sound of the drum makes him reflect on heroic sacrifice, the support of societies; a train of clouds lying heavily on the verge of a gloomy sky, endues him with that melancholy calm, so suited to nourish moral life. There is nothing which does not recall him to his duty and admonish him of his origin. Near or far, like a great mountain in a landscape, his philosophy will appear behind all his ideas and images. If he is restless, impassioned, sick with scruples, it will appear to him amidst storm and lightning, as it did to the genuine Puritans, to Cowper, Pascal, Carlyle. It will

[1] The Jansenists, the Puritans, and the Methodists are the extremes of this class.

appear to him in a grey fog, imposing and calm, if he enjoys, like Wordsworth, a calm mind and a pleasant life. Wordsworth was a wise and happy man, a thinker and a dreamer, who read and walked. He was from the first in tolerably easy circumstances, and had a small fortune. Happily married, amidst the favours of government and the respect of the public, he lived peacefully on the margin of a beautiful lake, in sight of noble mountains, in the pleasant retirement of an elegant house, amidst the admiration and attentions of distinguished and chosen friends, engrossed by contemplations which no storm came to distract, and by poetry, which was produced without any hindrance. In this deep calm he listens to his own thoughts; the peace was so great, within him and around him, that he could perceive the imperceptible. 'To me, the meanest flower that blows, can give thoughts that too often lie too deep for tears.' He saw a grandeur, a beauty, lessons in the trivial events which weave the woof of our most commonplace days. He needed not, for the sake of emotion, either splendid sights or unusual actions. The dazzling glare of the lamps, the pomp of the theatre, would have shocked him; his eyes are too delicate, accustomed to sweet and uniform tints. He was a poet of the twilight. Moral existence in commonplace existence, such was his object—the object of his preference. His paintings are cameos with a grey ground, which have a meaning; designedly he suppresses all which might please the senses, in order to speak solely to the heart.

Out of this character sprang a theory,—his theory of art, altogether spiritualistic, which, after repelling classical habits, ended by rallying Protestant sympathies, and won for him as many partisans as it had raised enemies.[1] Since the only important thing is moral life, let us devote ourselves solely to nourishing it. The reader must be moved, genuinely, with profit to his soul; the rest is indifferent: let us, then, show him objects moving in themselves, without dreaming of clothing them in a beautiful style. Let us strip ourselves of conventional language and poetic diction. Let us neglect noble words, scholastic and courtly epithets, and all the pomp of factitious splendour, which the classical writers thought themselves bound to assume, and justified in imposing. In poetry, as elsewhere, the grand question is, not ornament, but truth. Let us leave show, and seek effect. Let us speak in a bare style, as like as possible to prose, to ordinary conversation, even to rustic conversation, and let us choose our subjects at hand, in humble life. Let us take for our character an idiot boy, a shivering old peasant woman, a hawker, a servant stopping in the street. It is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the folks, which makes the beauty of a subject; it is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the words, which makes the beauty of poetry. What matters that it is a villager who weeps, if these tears enable me to see the maternal sentiment? What

[1] See the preface of his second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

matters that my verse is a line of rhymed prose, if this line displays a noble emotion? You read that you may carry away emotions, not phrases; you come to us to look for a moral culture, not pretty ways of speaking. And thereon Wordsworth, classifying his poems according to the different faculties of men and the different ages of life, undertakes to lead us through all compartments and degrees of inner education, to the convictions and sentiments which he has himself attained.

All this is very well, but on condition that the reader is in his own position; that is, an essentially moral philosopher, and an excessively sensitive man. When I shall have emptied my head of all worldly thoughts, and looked up at the clouds for ten years to refine my soul, I shall love this poetry. Meanwhile the web of imperceptible threads by which Wordsworth endeavours to bind together all sentiments and embrace all nature, breaks in my fingers; it is too fragile; it is a woof of woven spider-web, spun by a metaphysical imagination, and tearing as soon as a solid hand tries to touch it. Half of his pieces are childish, almost foolish;[1] dull events described in a dull style, one nullity after another, and that on principle. All the poets in the world would not reconcile us to so much tedium. Certainly a cat playing with three dry leaves may furnish a philosophical reflection, and figure forth a wise man sporting with the fallen leaves of life; but eighty lines on such a subject make us yawn—much worse, smile. At this rate you will find a lesson in an old tooth-brush, which still continues in use. Doubtless, also, the ways of Providence are unfathomable, and a selfish and brutal workman like Peter Bell may be converted by the beautiful conduct of an ass full of virtue and unselfishness; but this sentimental prettiness quickly grows insipid, and the style, by its intentional ingenuousness, renders it still more insipid. We are not over-pleased to see a grave man seriously imitate the language of nurses, and we murmur to ourselves that, with so many emotions, he must wet many handkerchiefs. We will acknowledge, if you like, that your sentiments are interesting; yet you might do, without trotting them all out before us.

We imagine we hear him say: 'Yesterday I read Walton's *Complete Angler;* let us write a sonnet about it. On Easter Sunday I was in a valley in Westmoreland; another sonnet. Two days ago I put too many questions to my little boy, and caused him to tell a lie; a poem. I am going to travel on the Continent and through Scotland; poems about all the incidents, monuments, adventures of the journey.'

You must consider your emotions very precious, that you put them all under glass? There are only three or four events in each of our lives worthy of being related; our powerful sensations deserve to be exhibited, because they recapitulate our whole existence; but not the little effects of the little agitations which pass through us, and the im-

[1] *Peter Bell; The White Doe; The Kitten and Falling Leaves,* etc.

perceptible oscillations of our everyday condition. Else I might end by explaining in rhyme that yesterday my dog broke his leg, and that this morning my wife put on her stockings inside out. The specialty of the artist is to cast great ideas in moulds as great as they; Wordsworth's moulds are of bad common clay, notched, unable to hold the noble metal which they ought to contain.

But the metal is genuinely noble; and besides several very beautiful sonnets, there is now and then a work, amongst others *The Excursion*, in which we forget the poverty of the scenery to admire the purity and elevation of the thought. In truth, the author hardly puts himself to the trouble of imagination; he walked along and conversed with an old Scotch pedlar: this is the whole of the history. The poets of this school always walked, regarding nature and thinking of human destiny; it is their permanent attitude. He converses, then, with the pedlar, a meditative character, who had become educated by a long experience of men and things, who spoke very well (too well!) of the soul and of God, and relates to him the history of a good woman who died of grief in her cottage; then with a solitary, a sort of sceptical Hamlet—morose, made gloomy by the death of his family, and the deceptions of his long journeyings; then with the clergyman, who brought them to the village cemetery, and described to them the life of several interesting dead people. Observe that, *passim* and gradually, reflections and moral discussions, scenery and moral descriptions, spread before us in hundreds, dissertations entwine their long thorny hedgerows, and metaphysical thistles multiply in every corner. In short, the poem is grave and sad as a sermon. Well! in spite of this ecclesiastical air and the tirades against Voltaire and his age,[1] we feel ourselves impressed as by a discourse of Theodore Jouffroy. After all, the man is convinced; he has spent his life meditating on these kinds of ideas, they are the poetry of his religion, race, climate; he is imbued with them; his pictures, stories, interpretations of visible nature and human life tend only to put the mind in the grave disposition which is proper to the inner man. I come here as into the valley of Port Royal: a solitary nook, stagnant waters, gloomy woods, ruins, gravestones, and above all the idea of responsible man, and the obscure beyond, to which we involuntarily move. I forget the careless French fashions, the custom of not disturbing the even tenor of life. There is an imposing seriousness, an austere beauty in this sincere reflection; respect comes in, we stop and are touched. This book is like a Protestant temple, august, though bare and monotonous. The poet sets forth the great interests of the soul:

[1] This dull product of a scoffer's pen
Impure conceits discharging from a heart
Hardened by impious pride!

Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols, 1849, viii.; *The Excursion*, bk 2; *The Solitary*, 58

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself,—
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To Conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing.'[1]

This inviolate personage, the only holy part of man, is holy in all stages; for this, Wordsworth selects as his characters a pedlar, a parson, villagers; in his eyes condition, education, habits, all the worldly envelope of a man, is without interest; what constitutes our worth is the integrity of our conscience; science itself is only profound when it penetrates moral life; for this life fails nowhere:

'To every Form of being is assigned . . .
An *active* principle:—howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters, and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.'[2]

Reject, then, with disdain this arid science:

'Where Knowledge, ill begun in cold remarks
On outward things, with formal inference ends;

[1] Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, vii.; *The Excursion*, Preface, 11.
[2] *Ibid.* vii. book 9, *Discourse of the Wanderer*, opening verses, 315.

Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils,
At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research. . . .
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnexion dead and spiritless;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Breaks down all grandeur.'[1]

Beyond the vanities of science and the pride of the world, there is the soul, whereby all are equal, and the broad and familiar Christian life opens at once its gates to all who would enter:

'The sun is fixed,
And the infinite magnificence of heaven
Fixed within reach of every human eye.
The sleepless Ocean murmurs for all ears,
The vernal field infuses fresh delight
Into all hearts. . . .
The primal duties shine aloft like stars,
The charities that soothe and heal and bless
Are scattered at the feet of man—like flowers.'

So, at the end of all agitation and all search appears the great truth, which is the abstract of the rest:

'Life, I repeat, is energy of love
Divine or human; exercised in pain,
In strife and tribulation; and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.'[2]

The verses sustain these serious thoughts by their grave harmony, as it were a motet accompanying a meditation or a prayer. They resemble the grand and monotonous music of the organ, which in the eventide, at the close of the service, rolls slowly in the twilight of arches and pillars.

When a certain phasis of the human intelligence comes to light, it does so from all sides; there is no part where it does not appear, no instincts which it does not renew. It enters simultaneously the two opposite camps, and seems to undo with one hand what it has made with the other. If it is, as it was formerly, the oratorical style, we find it at the same time in the service of cynical misanthropy, and in that of decorous humanity, in Swift and in Addison. If it is, as now, the philosophical spirit, it produces at once conservative harangues and socialistic utopias, Wordsworth and Shelley.[4] The latter, one of the greatest poets of the age, son of a rich baronet, beautiful as an angel, of extraordinary precocity, sweet, generous, tender, overflowing with all the gifts of heart, mind, birth, and fortune, marred his life,

[1] Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, vii.; *The Excursion*, book 4; *Despondency Corrected*, 137.

[2] *Ibid.* 149. [3] *Ibid.* last lines of book 5, *The Pastor*, 20.

[4] See also the novels of Goodwin, *Caleb Williams*.

as it were, wantonly, by introducing into his conduct the enthusiastic imagination which he should have kept for his verses. From his birth he had 'the vision' of sublime beauty and happiness, and the contemplation of the ideal world set him in arms against the actual. Having refused at Eton to be the fag of the big boys, he was treated by the boys and the masters with a revolting cruelty; suffered himself to be made a martyr, refused to obey, and, falling back into forbidden studies, began to form the most immoderate and most poetical dreams. He judged society by the oppression which he underwent, and man by the generosity which he felt in himself; thought that man was good, and society bad, and that it was only necessary to suppress established institutions to make earth 'a paradise.' He became a republican, a communist, preached fraternity, love, even abstinence from flesh, and as a means the abolition of kings, priests, and God.[1] Fancy the indignation which such ideas roused in a society so obstinately attached to established order—so intolerant, in which, above the conservative and religious instincts, Cant spoke like a master. He was expelled from the university; his father refused to see him; the Lord Chancellor, by a decree, took from him, as being unworthy, the custody of his two children; finally, he was obliged to quit England. I forgot to say that at eighteen he married a girl of mean birth, that they had been separated, that she committed suicide, that he had undermined his health by his excitement and sufferings,[2] and that to the end of his life he was nervous or sick. Is not this the life of a genuine poet? Eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones of the roadside. That knowledge of life which most poets have in common with novelists, he had not. Seldom has a mind been seen in which thought soared in loftier regions, and more far from actual things. When he tried to create characters and events—in *Queen Mab*, in *Alastor*, in *The Revolt of Islam*, in *Prometheus*—he only produced unsubstantial phantoms. Once only, in the *Cenci*, did he inspire a living figure worthy of Webster or old Ford; but in some sort in spite of himself, and because in it the sentiments were so unheard of and so strained that they suited superhuman conceptions. Elsewhere his world is throughout beyond our own. The laws of life are suspended or transformed. We move in this world between heaven and earth, in abstraction, dreamland, symbolism: the beings float in it like those fantastic figures which we see in the clouds, and which alternately undulate and change form capriciously, in their robes of snow and gold.

For souls thus constituted, the great consolation is nature. They are too fairly sensitive to find a distraction in the spectacle and pic-

[1] *Queen Mab*, and notes. At Oxford Shelley issued a kind of thesis, calling it 'On the Necessity of Atheism.'

[2] Some time before his death, when he was twenty-nine, he said, 'If I die now, I shall have lived as long as my father.'

ture of human passions. Shelley instinctively avoided it; this sight re-opened his own wounds. He was happier in the woods, at the sea-side, in contemplation of grand landscapes. The rocks, clouds, and meadows, which to ordinary eyes seem dull and insensible, are, to a wide sympathy, living and divine existences, which are an agreeable change from men. No virgin smile is so charming as that of the dawn, nor any joy more triumphant than that of the ocean when its waves creep and tremble, as far as the eye can see, under the prodigal splendour of heaven. At this sight the heart rises unwittingly to the sentiments of ancient legends, and the poet perceives in the inexhaustible bloom of things the peaceful soul of the great mother by whom everything grows and is supported. Shelley spent most of his life in the open air, especially in his boat; first on the Thames, then on the Lake of Geneva, then on the Arno, and in the Italian waters. He loved desert and solitary places, where man enjoys the pleasure of believing infinite what he sees, infinite as his soul. And such was this wide ocean, and this shore more barren than its waves. This love was a deep Germanic instinct, which, allied to pagan emotions, produced his poetry, pantheistic and yet pensive, almost Greek and yet English, in which fancy plays like a foolish, dreamy child, with the splendid skein of forms and colours. A cloud, a plant, a sunrise,—these are his characters: they were those of the primitive poets, when they took the lightning for a bird of fire, and the clouds for the flocks of heaven. But what a secret ardour beyond these splendid images, and how we feel the heat of the furnace beyond the coloured phantoms, which it sets afloat over the horizon![1] Has any one since Shakspeare and Spenser lighted on such tender and such grand ecstasies? Has any one painted so magnificently the cloud which watches by night in the sky, enveloping in its net the swarm of golden bees, the stars:

> 'The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
> And his burning plumes outspread,
> Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
> When the morning star shines dead . . .[2]
> That orbed maiden, with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call the moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> By the midnight breezes strewn.'[3]

Read again those verses on the garden, in which the sensitive plant dreams. Alas! they are the dreams of the poet, and the happy visions which floated in his virgin heart up to the moment when it opened out and withered. I will pause in time; I will not proceed, like him, beyond the recollections of his spring-time:

[1] See in Shelley's Works, 1853, *The Witch of Atlas*, *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, the end of *The Revolt of Islam*, *Alastor*, and the whole of *Prometheus*.

[2] *The Cloud*, c. iii. 503.

[3] *Ibid.* c. iv. 503.

'The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness.

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare;

And the wand-like lily which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through the clear dew on the tender sky. . . .

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was prankt, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue.

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells,
As fair as the fabulous asphodels.
And flowerets which drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.'[1]

Everything lives here, everything breathes and yearns. This poem, the story of a plant, is also the story of a soul—Shelley's soul, the sensitive. Is it not natural to confound them? Is there not a com

[1] Shelley's Works, 1853, *The Sensitive Plant*, 490.

munity of nature amongst all the dwellers in this world? Verily there is a soul in everything; in the universe is a soul: be the existence what it will, unhewn or rational, defined or vague, ever beyond its sensible form shines a secret essence and something divine, which we catch sight of by sublime illuminations, never reaching or penetrating it. It is this presentiment and yearning which raises all modern poetry,—now in Christian meditations, as with Campbell and Wordsworth, now in pagan visions, as with Keats and Shelley. They hear the great heart of nature beat; they would reach it; they assay all spiritual and sensible approaches, through Judea and through Greece, by consecrated dogmas and by proscribed dogmas. In this splendid and senseless effort the greatest are exhausted and die. Their poetry, which they drag with them over these sublime tracks, is rent thereby. One alone, Byron, attains the summit; and of all these grand poetic draperies, which float like standards, and seem to summon men to the conquest of supreme truth, we see now but tatters scattered by the wayside.

Yet they did their work. Under their multiplied efforts, and by their involuntary concert, the idea of the beautiful is changed, and other ideas change by contagion. Conservatives contribute to it like revolutionaries, and the new spirit breathes through the poems which bless and those which curse Church and State. We learn from Wordsworth and Byron, by profound Protestantism[1] and confirmed scepticism, that in this sacred cant-defended establishment there is matter for reform or for revolt; that we may discover moral merits other than those which the law tickets and opinion accepts; that beyond conventional confessions there are truths; that beyond respected conditions there are greatnesses; that beyond regular positions there are virtues; that greatness is in the heart and the genius; and all the rest, actions and beliefs, are subaltern. We have just seen that beyond literary conventionalities there is a poetry, and consequently we are disposed to feel that beyond religious dogmas there may be a faith, and beyond social institutions a justice. The old edifice totters, and the Revolution enters, not by a sudden inundation, as in France, but by slow infiltration. The wall built up against it by public intolerance cracks and opens: the war waged against Jacobinism, republican and imperial, ends in victory; and henceforth we may regard opposing ideas, not as opposing enemies, but as ideas. We regard them, and, accommodating them to the different countries, we import them. Catholics are enfranchised, rotten boroughs abolished, the electoral

[1] 'Our life is turned
Out of her course, whenever man is made
An offering, a sacrifice, a tool,
Or implement, a passive thing employed
As a brute mean.'—Wordsworth, *The Excursion*.

franchise lowered; unjust taxes, which kept up the price of corn, were repealed; ecclesiastical tithes changed into rent charges; the terrible laws protecting property were modified, the incidence of taxation brought more and more on the rich classes; old institutions, formerly established for the advantage of a race, and in this race of a class, are only maintained when for the advantage of all classes; privileges become functions; and in this triumph of the middle class, which shapes opinion and assumes the ascendency, the aristocracy, passing from sinecures to services, seems now legitimate only as a national nursery, kept up to furnish public men. At the same time narrow orthodoxy is enlarged. Zoology, astronomy, geology, botany, anthropology, all the sciences of observation, so much cultivated and so popular, forcibly introduce their dissolvent discoveries. Criticism comes in from Germany, re-handles the Bible, re-writes the history of dogma, attacks dogma itself. Meanwhile poor Scotch philosophy is dried up. Amidst the agitations of sects, endeavouring to transform each other, and the rising Unitarianism, we hear at the gates of the sacred ark the Continental philosophy roaring like a wave. Now already has it encroached upon literature: for fifty years all great writers have plunged into it,—Sidney Smith, by his sarcasms against the numbness of the clergy and the oppression of the Catholics; Arnold, by his protests against the religious monopoly of the clergy and the ecclesiastical monopoly of the Anglicans; Macaulay, by his history and panegyric of the liberal revolution; Thackeray, by attacking the nobles, in the interests of the middle class; Dickens, by attacking dignitaries and wealthy men, in the interests of the lowly and poor; Currer Bell and Mrs. Browning, by defending the initiative and independence of women; Stanley and Jowett, by introducing the German exegesis, and by fixing biblical criticism; Carlyle, by importing German metaphysics in an English form; Stuart Mill, by importing French positivism in an English form; Tennyson himself, by extending over the beauties of all lands and all ages the protection of his amiable dilettantism and his poetical sympathies,—each according to his pattern and his position, with various profundity; all restrained within reach of the shore by their practical prejudices, all strengthened against falling by their moral prejudices; all bent, some with more of eagerness, others with more of distrust, in welcoming or giving entrance to the growing tide of modern democracy and philosophy in constitution and church, without doing damage, and gradually so as to destroy nothing, and to make everything bear fruit.

CHAPTER II.

Lord Byron.

I. The Man—Family—Impassioned character—Precocious loves—Life of excess—Combative character—Revolt against opinion—*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—Bravado and rashness—Marriage—Extravagance of adverse opinion—Departure—Political life in Italy—Sorrows and violence.

II. The poet—Reasons for writing—Manner of writing—How his poetry is personal—Classical taste—How this gift served him—*Childe Harold*—The hero—The scenery—The style.

III. His short poems—Oratorical manner—Melodramatic effects—Truth of his descriptions of scenery—Sincerity of sentiments—Pictures of sad and extreme emotions—Dominant idea of death and despair—*Mazeppa*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*—Analogy of this conception with the *Edda* and Shakspeare.

IV. *Manfred*—Comparison of *Manfred* and *Faust*—Conception of legend and life in Goethe—Symbolical and philosophical character of *Faust*—Wherein Byron is inferior to Goethe—Wherein he is superior—Conception of character and action in Byron—Dramatic character of his poem—Contrast between the universal and the personal poet.

V. Scandal in England—Constraint and hypocrisy of manners—How and by what law moral conceptions vary—Life and morals of the south—*Beppo*—*Don Juan*—Transformation of Byron's talent and style—Picture of sensuous beauty and happiness—Haidee—How he combats British cant—Human hypocrisy—His idea of man—Of woman—Donna Julia—The shipwreck—The capture of Ismail—Naturalness and variety of his style—Excess and wearing out of his poetic vein—His drama—Departure for Greece, and death.

VI. Position of Byron in his age—Disease of the age—Divine conceptions of happiness and life—The conception of such happiness by literature—By the sciences—Future stability of reason—Modern conception of nature.

I.

I HAVE reserved for the last the greatest and most English of these artists; he is so great and so English that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and of his age than from all the rest together. His ideas were banned during his life; it has been attempted to depreciate his genius since his death. To this day English critics are unjust to him. He fought all his life against the society from which he came; and during his life, as after his death, he suffered the pain of the resentment which he provoked, and the repugnance to

which he gave rise. A foreign critic may be more impartial, and freely praise the powerful hand whose blows he has not felt.

If ever there was a violent and madly sensitive soul, but incapable of being otherwise; ever agitated, but in an enclosure without issue; predisposed to poetry by its innate fire, but limited by its natural barriers to a single kind of poetry—it was Byron's.

This promptitude to extreme emotions was with him a family legacy, and the result of education. His great-uncle, a sort of raving and misanthropical maniac, had slain in a tavern brawl, by candle-light, Mr. Chaworth, his relative, and had been tried before the House of Lords. His father, a brutal roysterer, had eloped with the wife of Lord Carmarthen, ruined and ill-treated Miss Gordon, his second wife; and, after living like a madman and dishonest fellow, had gone, with the last of the family property, to die abroad. His mother, in her moments of fury, would tear to pieces her dresses and her bonnets. When her wretched husband died she almost lost her reason, and her cries were heard in the street. What a childhood Byron passed in the care of 'this lioness;' in what storms of insults, interspersed with softer moods, he himself lived, just as passionate and more bitter, it would take a long story to tell. She ran after him, called him a 'lame brat,' shouted at him, and threw fire-shovel and tongs at his head. He held his tongue, bowed, and none the less felt the outrage. One day, when he was 'in one of his silent rages,' they had to take out of his hand a knife which he had taken from the table, and which he was already raising to his throat. Another time the quarrel was so terrible, that son and mother, each privately, went to 'the apothecary's, inquiring anxiously whether the other had been to purchase poison, and cautioning the vendor of drugs not to attend to such an application, if made.'[1] When he went to school, 'his friendships were passions.' Many years afterwards, he never heard the name of Lord Clare, one of his old schoolfellows, pronounced, without 'a beating of the heart.'[2] A score of times he got himself into trouble for his friends, offering them his time, his pen, his purse. One day, at Harrow, a big boy claimed the right to fag his friend, little Peel, and finding him refractory, gave him a beating on the inner fleshy side of his arm, which he had twisted round to make it more sensitive. Byron, too small to fight the rascal, came up to him, 'blushing with rage,' tears in his eyes, and asked with a trembling voice how many stripes he meant to inflict. 'Why,' returned the executioner, 'you little rascal, what is that to you?' 'Because, if you please,' said Byron, holding out his arm. 'I would take half.'[3] He never met an object of distress without affording him succour.[4] Later, in Italy, he gave away a thousand pounds out of every four thousand he spent. The sources of life in this heart were too full,

[1] Byron's Works, ed. Moore, 17 vols. 1822; *Life* i. 102.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 63.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 69
[4] *Ibid.* 137.

and flooded forth good and evil impetuously, at the least shock. Like Dante, at the age of eight he fell in love with a child named Mary Duff.

'How very odd that I should have been so utterly, devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word! . . . I recollect all our caresses, . . . my restlessness, my sleeplessness. My misery, my love for that girl were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. When I heard of her being married, . . . it nearly threw me into convulsions.'[1]

'My passion had its usual effects upon me. I could not sleep—I could not eat—I could not rest; and although I had reason to know that she loved me, it was the texture of my life to think of the time which must elapse before we could meet again, being usually about twelve hours of separation. But I was a fool then, and am not much wiser now.'[2]

At twelve years he fell in love with his cousin, Margaret Parker.

He never was wiser. Hard reading at school; vehement exercise, later on, at Cambridge, Newstead, and London; prolonged watches, debauches, long fasts, a destructive way of living,—he rushed to the extreme of every taste and every excess. As he was a dandy, and one of the most brilliant, he nearly let himself die of hunger for fear of becoming fat, then drank and ate greedily during his nights of recklessness. Moore said:

'Lord Byron, for the last two days, had done nothing towards sustenance beyond eating a few biscuits and (to appease appetite) chewing mastic. . . . He confined himself to lobsters, and of these finished two or three to his own share,—interposing, sometimes, a small liqueur-glass of strong white brandy, sometimes a tumbler of very hot water, and then pure brandy again, to the amount of near half a dozen small glasses of the latter. . . . After this we had claret, of which having despatched two bottles between us, at about four o'clock in the morning we parted.'[3]

Another day we find in Byron's journal the following words:

'Yesterday, dined *tête-à-tête* at the "Cocoa" with Scrope Davies—sat from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret, neither of which wines ever affect me'[4]

Later, at Venice:

'I have hardly had a wink of sleep this week past. I have had some curious masking adventures this carnival. . . . I will work the mine of my youth to the last vein of the ore, and then—good night. I have lived, and am content.[5]

At this rate the organs wear out, and intervals of temperance are not sufficient to repair them. The stomach does not continue to act, the nerves get out of order, and the soul undermines the body, and the body the soul.

'I always wake in actual despair and despondency, in all respects, even of that which pleased me over-night. In England, five years ago, I had the same

[1] Byron's Works, *Life*, i. 26. [2] *Ibid.* i. 53. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 83.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 20, March 28, 1814. [5] *Ibid.* iv. 81; Letter to Moore, Feb. 12, 1818.

kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst that I have drank as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in one night after going to bed, and been still thirsty, . . . striking off the necks of bottles from mere thirsty impatience.'[1]

Much less is necessary to ruin mind and body wholly. Thus these vehement minds live, ever driven and broken by their own energy, like a cannon ball, which, when arrested, turns and seems motionless, so quickly it goes flying, but at the smallest obstacle leaps up, rebounds, raises a cloud of dust, and ends by burying itself in the earth. Beyle, a most shrewd observer, who lived with Byron for several weeks, says that on certain days he was mad; at other times, in presence of beautiful things, he became sublime. Though reserved and so proud, music made him weep. The rest of his time, petty English passions, pride of rank, for instance, a vain dandyism, unhinged him: he spoke of Brummel with a shudder of jealousy and admiration. But, small or great, the present passion swept down upon his mind like a tempest, roused him, transported him either into imprudence or genius. His journal, his familiar letters, all his unstudied prose, is, as it were, trembling with wit, anger, enthusiasm: since Saint Simon we have not seen more lifelike confidences. All styles appear dull, and all souls sluggish by the side of his.

In this splendid rush of unbridled and disbanded faculties, which leaped up at random, and seemed to drive him without option to the four quarters of the globe, one took the reins, and cast him on the wall against which he was broken.

'Sir Walter Scott describes Lord Byron as being a man of real goodness of heart, and the kindest and best feelings, miserably thrown away by his foolish contempt of public opinion. Instead of being warned or checked by public opposition, it roused him to go on in a worse strain, as if he said, "Ay, you don't like it; well, you shall have something worse for your pains."'[2]

This rebellious instinct is inherent in the race; there was a whole cluster of wild passions, born of the climate,[3] which nourished him: a gloomy humour, violent imagination, indomitable pride, a relish of danger, a craving for strife, the inner exaltation, only satiated by destruction, and that sombre madness which urged forward the Scandinavian Bierserkers, when, in an open bark, under a sky cloven with the lightning, they launched out upon the tempest, whose fury they had breathed. This instinct is in the blood: people are born so, as they

[1] Byron's Works, *Life*, v. 96. Feb. 2, 1821.

[2] Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vii. 323.

[3] 'If I was born, as the nurses say, with a "silver spoon in my mouth," it has stuck in my throat, and spoiled palate, so that nothing put into it is swallowed with much relish,—unless it be cayenne. . . I see no such horror in a dreamless sleep, and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not make tiresome.'

are born lions or bulldogs.[1] Byron was still a little boy in petticoats when his nurse scolded him rudely for having soiled or torn a new frock which he had just put on. He got into one of his silent rages, seized the garment with his hands, rent it from top to bottom, and stood erect, motionless, and gloomy before the storming nurse, so as to set more effectually her wrath at defiance. His pride overflowed. When at ten he inherited the title of lord, and his name was first called at school, preceded by the title *dominus*, he could not answer the customary *adsum*, stood silent amidst the general stare of his school-fellows, and at last burst into tears. Another time, at Harrow, in a dispute which was dividing the school, a boy said, 'Byron won't join us, for he never likes to be second anywhere.' He was offered the command, and then only would he condescend to take part with them. Never to submit to a master; to rise with his whole soul against every semblance of encroachment or rule; to keep his person intact and inviolate at all cost, and to the end against all; to dare everything rather than give sign of submission,—such was his character. This is why he was disposed to undergo anything rather than give signs of weakness. At ten he was a stoic from pride. His foot was painfully stretched in a wooden contrivance whilst he was taking his Latin lesson, and his master pitied him, saying 'he must be suffering.' 'Never mind, Mr. Rogers,' he said, 'you shall not see any signs of it in me.'[2] Such as he was as a child, he continued as a man. In mind and body he strove, or prepared himself for strife.[3] Every day, for hours at a time, he boxed, fired pistols, practised the sabre, ran and leaped, rode, overcame obstacles. These were the exploits of his hands and muscles; but he needed others. For lack of enemies he found fault with society, and made war upon it. We know to what excesses the dominant opinions then ran. England was at the height of the war with France, and thought it was fighting for morality and liberty. In their eyes, at this time, church and constitution were holy things: beware how you touch them, if you would not become a public enemy! In this fit of national passion and Protestant severity, whosoever publicly avowed liberal ideas and manners seemed an incendiary, and stirred up against himself the instincts of property, the doctrines of moralists, the interests of politicians, and the prejudices of the people. Byron chose this moment to praise Voltaire and Rousseau, to admire Napoleon, to avow himself a sceptic, to plead for nature and pleasure against cant and rule, to say that high English society, debauched and hypocritical, made phrases and killed men, to preserve their sinecures and rotten

[1] 'I like Junius: he was a good hater.—I don't understand yielding sensitiveness. What I feel is an immense rage for forty-eight hours.'

[2] Byron's Works, *Life*, i. 41.

[3] 'I like energy—even mental energy—of all kinds, and have need of both mental and corporeal.'—*Ibid.* ii.

boroughs. As though political hatred was not enough, he contracted, in addition, literary animosities, attacked the whole body of critics,[1] ran down the new poetry, declared that the most celebrated were 'Claudians,' men of the later empire, raged against the Lake school, and in consequence had in Southey a bitter and unwearied enemy. Thus provided with enemies, he laid himself open to attack on all sides. He decried himself through his hatred of cant, his bravado, his boasting about his vices. He depicted himself in his heroes, but for the worse; in such a way that no one could fail to recognise him, and think him much worse than he was. Walter Scott wrote, immediately after seeing *Childe Harold:*

'*Childe-Harold* is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer's heart or morals. . . . Vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence almost equal to the noble Lord's other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the ennui arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. There is a monstrous deal of conceit in it, too, for it is informing the inferior part of the world that their little old-fashioned scruples of limitation are not worthy of his regard.'[2] . . .

'My noble friend is something like my old peacock, who chooses to bivouac apart from his lady, and sit below my bedroom window, to keep me awake with his screeching lamentation. Only, I own he is not equal in melody to Lord Byron.'[3]

Such were the sentiments which he called forth in all respectable classes. He was pleased thereat, and did worse—giving out that in his adventures in the East he had dared a good many things; and he was not indignant when confounded with his heroes. Once he said he should like to feel for once the sensations of a man who had committed a murder. Another time he wrote in his Diary:

'Hobhouse told me an odd report,—that I am the actual Conrad, the veritable Corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in privacy. Um! people sometimes hit near the truth, but never the whole truth. He don't know what I was about the year after he left the Levant; nor does any one—nor—nor—nor—however, it is a lie—"but I doubt the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth."'[4]

Dangerous words, which were turned against him like a dagger; but he loved danger, mortal danger, and was only at ease when he saw the points of all angers bristling against him. Alone against all, against an armed society; erect, invincible, even against common sense, even against conscience,—it was then he felt in all his strained nerves the great and terrible sensation, to which his whole being involuntarily inclined.

A last imprudence brought down the attack. As long as he was an unmarried man, his excesses might be excused by the over-strong fire of a temperament which often causes youth in this land to revolt

[1] In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

[2] Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, iii. 389. [3] *Ibid.* v. 141.

[4] Moore's *Life of Byron*, iii. 12, March 10, Thor's Day. The last part of the sentence is a quotation from *Macbeth*, v. 5.

against good taste and rule; but marriage settles them, and it was marriage which in him completed his unsettling. He found that his wife was a kind of model-virtue, mentioned as such, 'a creature of rule, correct and dry, incapable of committing a fault herself, and of forgiving. His servant Fletcher observed, that he never knew a lady who could not govern his master, except his wife. Lady Byron thought her husband mad, and had him examined by physicians. Having learned that he was in his right mind, she left him, returned to her father, and refused ever to see him again. Thereupon he passed for a monster. The papers covered him with opprobrium; his friends induced him not to go to a theatre or to Parliament, fearing that he would be hooted or insulted. The fury and torture which so violent a soul, precociously accustomed to brilliant glory, felt in this universal storm of outrage, can only be learned from his verses. He grew stubborn, went to Venice, and steeped himself in the voluptuous Italian life, even in low debauchery, the better to insult the Puritan prudery which had condemned him, and left it only through an offence still more blamed, his public intimacy with the young Countess Guiccioli. Meanwhile he showed himself as bitterly republican in politics as in morality. He wrote in 1813: 'I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments.' This time, at Ravenna, his house was the centre and storehouse of conspirators, and he generously and imprudently prepared to take arms with them, to strike for the deliverance of Italy:

'They mean to insurrect here, and are to honour me with a call thereupon. I shall not fall back; though I don't think them in force and heart sufficient to make much of it. But, *onward*. . . . What signifies *self*? . . . It is not one man nor a million, but the *spirit* of liberty which must be spread. . . . The mere selfish calculation ought never to be made on such occasions; and, at present, it shall not be computed by me. . . . I should almost regret that my own affairs went well, when those of nations are in peril.'[1]

In the meantime he had quarrels with the police: his house was watched, he was threatened with assassination, and yet he rode out daily, and went into the neighbouring pine-forest to practise pistol-shooting. These are the sentiments of a man at the muzzle of a loaded cannon, waiting for it to go off. The emotion is great, nay, heroic, but it is not sweet; and certainly, even at this season of great emotion, he was unhappy. Nothing is more likely to poison happiness than a combative spirit. He writes:

'What is the reason that I have been, all my lifetime, more or less *ennuyé*? . . . I do not know how to answer this, but presume that it is constitutional,—as well as the waking in low spirits, which I have invariably done for many years. Temperance and exercise, which I have practised at times, and for a long time together vigorously and violently, made little or no difference. Violent passions

[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 67, Jan. 9, 1821.

did: when under their immediate influence—it is odd, but—I was in agitated, but *not* in depressed spirits. . . . Wine and spirits make me sullen and savage to ferocity—silent, however, and retiring, and not quarrelsome, if not spoken to. Swimming also raises my spirits; but in general they are low, and get daily lower. That is *hopeless;* for I do not think I am so much *ennuyé* as I was at nineteen. The proof is, that then I must game, or drink, or be in motion of some kind, or I was miserable.'[1]

'What I feel most growing upon me are laziness, and a disrelish more powerful than indifference. If I rouse, it is into fury. I presume that I shall end (if not earlier by accident, or some such termination) like Swift, "dying at top."[2] Lega (his servant) came in with a letter about a bill unpaid at Venice which I thought paid months ago. I flew into a paroxysm of rage, which almost made me faint. I have always had *une âme*, which not only tormented itself, but everybody else in contact with it, and an *esprit violent*, which has almost left me without any *esprit* at all.'[3]

A horrible foreboding, which haunted him to the end! On his death-bed, in Greece, he refused, I know not why, to be bled, and preferred to die at once. They threatened that the uncontrolled disease might end in madness. He sprang up: 'There! you are, I see, a d—d set of butchers! Take away as much blood as you like, but have done with it,'[4] and stretched out his arm. Amidst such splendours and anxieties he passed his life. Anguish endured, danger braved, resistance overcome, grief relished, all the greatness and sadness of the black warlike madness,—such are the images which he needs must let pass before him. In default of action he had dreams, and he only betook himself to dreams for want of action. He said, when embarking for Greece, that he had taken poetry for lack of better, and that it was not his fit work. 'What is a poet? what is he worth? what does he do? He is a babbler.' He augured ill of the poetry of his age, even of his own; saying that, if he lived ten years more, they should see something else from him but verses. In fact, he would have been more at home as a sea-king, or a captain of a band of troopers during the Middle-ages. Except two or three gleams of Italian sunshine, his poetry and life are those of a Scald transplanted into modern life, who in this over-well regulated world did not find his vocation.

II.

Byron was a poet, then, but in his own fashion—a strange fashion, like that in which he lived. There were internal tempests within him, avalanches of ideas, which found issue only in writing. He wrote:

'I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not "for their sweet voices." To withdraw myself from myself has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all—and publishing also the continuance of the same object, by the action it affords to the mind, which else recoils upon itself.'

[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 60, Jan. 6, 1821.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 97, Feb. 2, 1821. [3] *Ibid.* 95. [4] *Ibid.* vi. 206.

He wrote almost always with astonishing rapidity, *The Corsair* in ten days, *The Bride of Abydos* in four days. While it was printing he added and corrected, but without recasting:

'I told you before that I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger. If I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle again; but if I do it, it is crushing.'[2]

Doubtless he sprang, but he had a chain: never, in the freest flight of his thoughts, did he liberate himself from himself. He dreams of himself, and sees himself throughout. It is a boiling torrent, but hedged in with rocks. No such great poet has had so narrow an imagination; he could not metamorphose himself into another. They are his own sorrows, his own revolts, his own travels, which, hardly transformed and modified, he introduces into his verses. He does not invent, he observes; he does not create, he transcribes. His copy is darkly exaggerated, but it is a copy. 'I could not write upon anything,' says he, 'without some personal experience and foundation.' You will find in his letters and notebook, almost feature for feature, the most striking of his descriptions. The capture of Ismail, the shipwreck of Don Juan, are, almost word for word, like two accounts of it in prose. If none but cockneys could attribute to him the crimes of his heroes, none but blind men could fail to see in him the sentiments of his characters. This is so true, that he has not created more than one. Childe Harold, Lara, the Giaour, the Corsair, Manfred, Sardanapalus, Cain, Tasso, Dante, and the rest, are always the same—one man represented under various costumes, in several lands, with different expressions; but just as painters do, when, by change of garments, decorations, and attitudes, they draw fifty portraits from the same model. He meditated too much upon himself to be enamoured of anything else. The habitual sternness of his will prevented his mind from being flexible; his force, always concentrated for effort and strained for strife, shut him up in self-contemplation, and reduced him never to make a poem, save of his own heart.

In what style would he write? With these concentrated and tragic sentiments he had a classical mind. By the strangest mixture, the books, which he preferred, were at once the most violent or the most regular, the Bible above all:

'I am a great reader and admirer of those books (the Bible), and had read them through and through before I was eight years old; that is to say, the Old Testament, for the New struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure.'[2]

Observe this word: he did not relish the tender and self-denying mysticism of the gospel, but the cruel sternness and lyrical outcries of the old Hebrews. Next to the Bible he loved Pope, the most correct and formal of men:

[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 23, Ravenna, Nov. 18, 1820.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 265.

'As to Pope, I have always regarded him as the greatest name in our poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek Temple, with a Gothic Cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish Mosque and all sorts of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakspeare and Milton pyramids, but I prefer the Temple of Theseus or the Parthenon to a mountain of burnt brickwork. . . . The grand distinction of the underforms of the new school of poets is their vulgarity. By this I do not mean they are coarse, but shabby genteel.'[1]

And he presently wrote two letters with incomparable vivacity and spirit, to defend Pope against the scorn of modern writers. These writers, according to him, have spoiled the public taste. The only ones who were worth anything—Crabbe, Campbell, Rogers—imitate the style of Pope. A few others had talent; but, take them all together, the newest ones had perverted literature: they did not know their language; their expressions are only approximate, above or below the true tone, forced or dull. He ranges himself amongst the corrupters,[2] and we soon see that this theory is not an invention, springing from bad temper and polemics; he returns to it. In his two first attempts—*Hours of Idleness*, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—he tried to follow it up. Later, and in almost all his works, we find its effect. He recommends and practises the rule of unity in tragedy. He loves oratorical form, symmetrical phrase, condensed style. He likes to plead his passions. Sheridan tried to induce Byron to devote himself to eloquence; and the vigour, piercing logic, wonderful vivacity, close argument of his prose, prove that he would have had the first rank amongst pamphleteers.[3] If he attains to it amongst the poets, it is partly due to his classical system. This oratorical form, in which Pope compresses his thought like La Bruyère, magnifies the force and swing of vehement ideas; like a narrow and straight canal, it collects and dashes them down its slope: there is then nothing which their impetus does not carry away; and it is thus Lord Byron from the first, through restless criticisms, over jealous reputations, has made his way to the public.[4]

Thus *Childe Harold* made its way. At the first onset every one was agitated. It was more than an author who spoke; it was a man. In spite of his disavowals, it was well seen that the author was but one with his hero: he calumniated himself, but he imitated himself. He was recognised in that young voluptuous and disgusted man, ready to weep amidst his orgies, who

> 'Sore sick at heart,
> And from his fellow bacchanals would flee;
> 'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
> But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:

[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 150, Ravenna, May 3, 1821.

[2] 'All the styles of the day are bombastic. I don't except my own; no one has done more through negligence to corrupt the language.'

[3] See his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

[4] Thirty thousand copies of the *Corsair* were sold in one day.

Apart he stalk'd in joyless reverie,
And from his native land resolved to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea;
With pleasure drugg'd, he almost long'd for woe.'[1]

Fleeing from his native land, he carried, amongst the splendours and cheerfulness of the south, his unwearying persecutor, 'demon thought,' implacable behind him. The scenery was recognised: it had been copied on the spot. And what was the whole book but a diary of travel? He said in it what he had seen and thought. What poetic fiction is as valuable as genuine sensation? What is more penetrating than confidence, voluntary or involuntary? Truly, every word here noted an emotion of eye or heart:

'The tender azure of the unruffled deep. . . .
The mountain-moss by scorching skies imbrown'd. . . .
The orange tints that gild the greenest bough.' . . .[2]

All these beauties, calm or imposing, he had enjoyed, and sometimes suffered through them; and hence we see them through his verse. Whatever he touched, he made palpitate and live; because, when he saw it, his heart had beaten and he had lived. He himself, a little later, quitting the mask of Harold, took up the parable in his own name; and who would not be touched by avowals so passionate and complete?

'Yet must I think less wildly: I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time can not abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate. .

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;
Proud though in desolation, which could find,
A life within itself to breathe without mankind. . .

Like the Chaldean, he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars,
And human frailties were forgotten quite:

[1] Byron's Works, viii.; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. i. 8.
[2] *Ibid.* c. i 19.

Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat. [1]

Such are the sentiments wherewith he surveyed nature and history, not to comprehend them and forget himself before them, but to seek in them and impress upon them the image of his own passions. He does not let objects speak, but forces them to answer him. Amidst their peace, he is only occupied by his own emotion. He raises them to the tone of his soul, and compels them to repeat his own cries. All is inflated here, as in himself; the vast strophe rolls along, carrying in its overflowing bed the flood of vehement ideas; declamation unfolds itself, pompous, and at times artificial (it was his first work), but potent, and so often sublime that the rhetorical dotings, which he yet preserved, disappeared under the afflux of splendours, with which it is loaded. Wordsworth, Walter Scott, by the side of this prodigality of accumulated splendours, seemed poor and gloomy; never since Æschylus was seen so tragic a pomp; and men followed, with a sort of pang, the train of gigantic figures, whom he brought in mournful ranks before our eyes, from the far past:

'I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Look'd to the wing'd Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!

She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance, with majestic motion,
A ruler of the waters and their powers:

[1] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iii. 7–15;

And such she was;—her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
In purple was she robed, and of her feast
Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased. . .'

Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon;
Restless it rolls, now fix'd, and now anon
Flashing afar,—and at his iron feet
Destruction cowers, to mark what deeds are done;
For on this morn three potent nations meet,
To shed before his shrine the blood he deems most sweet

By Heaven! it is a splendid sight to see
(For one who hath no friend, no brother there)
Their rival scarfs of mix'd embroidery,
Their various arms that glitter in the air!
What gallant war-hounds rouse them from their lair
And gnash their fangs, loud yelling for the prey!
All join the chase, but few the triumphs share;
The Grave shall bear the chiefest prize away,
And Havoc scarce for joy can number their array. . '

What from this barren being do we reap?
Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,
Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,
And all things weigh'd in custom's falsest scale;
Opinion an omnipotence,—whose veil
Mantles the earth with darkness, until right
And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale
Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,
Rotting from sire to son, and age to age,
Proud of their trampled nature, and so die,
Bequeathing their hereditary rage
To the new race of inborn slaves, who wage
War for their chains, and rather than be free,
Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage
Within the same arena where they see
Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree,' [3]

Has ever style better expressed a soul? It is seen here labouring and expanding. Long and stormily the ideas boiled like metal heaped in the furnace. They melted there before the strain of the intense heat; they mingled therein their lava amidst shocks and explosions,

[1] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iv. 1 and 2.
[2] *Ibid.* c. i. 39 and 40 [3] *Ibid.* c. iv. 93 and 94.

and then at last the door is opened: a dull stream of fire descends into the trough prepared beforehand, heating the circumambient air, and its glittering hues scorch the eyes which persist in looking upon it.

III.

Description and monologue did not suffice Byron; and he needed, to express his ideal, events and actions. Only events put to proof the force and spring of the soul; only actions manifest and measure this force and spring. Amidst events he sought for the most powerful, amidst actions the strongest; and we see appear successively *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Mazeppa*, and *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

I know that these sparkling poems have grown dull in forty years. In their necklace of oriental pearls have been discovered beads of glass; and Byron, who only half loved them, judged better than his judges. Yet he had judged amiss; those which he preferred are the most false. His *Corsair* is marred by classic elegancies: the pirates' song at the beginning is no truer than a chorus at the Italian opera; his scamps propound philosophical antitheses as balanced as those of Pope. A hundred times ambition, glory, envy, despair, and the other abstract personages, whose images in the time of the Empire the French used to set upon their drawing-room clocks, break in amidst living passions.[1] The noblest passages are disfigured by pedantic apostrophes, and the pretentious poetic diction sets up its threadbare frippery and conventional ornaments.[2] Far worse, he studies effect and follows the fashion. Melodramatic strings pull his characters, so as to obtain the grimace which shall make his public shudder:

> 'Who thundering comes on blackest steed,
> With slacken'd bit and hoof of speed?
> . . . Approach, thou craven crouching slave,
> Say, is not this Thermopylæ?'

Wretched fashions, emphatic and vulgar, imitated from Lucan and our modern Lucans, but which produce their effect during a first perusal, and on the herd of readers. There is an infallible means of attracting a mob, which is, to shout out loud; with shipwrecks, sieges, murders, and combats, we shall always interest them; show them

[1] For example, 'as weeping Beauty's cheek at Sorrow's tale.

[2] Here are verses like Pope, very beautiful and false:

> 'And havock loath so much the waste of time,
> She scarce had left an uncommitted crime.
> One hour beheld him since the tide he stemm'd,
> Disguised, discover'd, conquering, ta'en, condemn'd
> A chief on land, an outlaw on the deep,
> Destroying, saving, prison'd, and asleep!'

pirates, desperate adventurers,—these distorted or furious faces will draw them out of their regular and monotonous existence; they will go to see them as they go to the melodramas, and through the same instinct which induces them to read novels in penny numbers. Add, by way of contrast, angelic women, tender and submissive, all beautiful as angels. Byron describes this, and adds to all these seductions a panoramic scenery, oriental or picturesque adornments; old Alpine castles, the Mediterranean waves, the setting suns of Greece, the whole in high relief, with marked shadows and brilliant colours. We are all of the people, as regards emotions; and the great lady, like the waiting-woman, sheds tears at once, without cavilling with the author as to the means he uses.

And yet truth flows through it all. No; this man is not an arranger of effects or an inventor of phrases. He has lived amidst the spectacles he describes; he has experienced the emotions he relates. He has been in the tent of Ali Pacha, and relished the strong savour of ocean adventure and savage manners. He has been a score of times near death,—in the Morea, in the anguish and the solitude of fever; at Suli, in a shipwreck; at Malta, in England, and in Italy, in the dangers of a duel, plots of insurrection, commencements of sudden attacks, at sea, in arms, on horseback, having seen assassination, wounds, agonies close to him, and that more than once.

'I am living here exposed to it (assassination) daily, for I have happened to make a powerful and unprincipled man my enemy; and I never sleep the worse for it, or ride in less solitary places, because precaution is useless, and one thinks of it as of a disease which may or may not strike.'[1]

He spoke the truth; no one ever held himself more erect and firm in danger. One day, near the Gulf of San Fiorenzo, his yacht was thrown on the coast; the sea was terrific, and the rocks in sight; the passengers kissed their rosaries, or fainted with horror; and the two captains being consulted, declared shipwreck inevitable. 'Well,' said Lord Byron, 'we are all born to die; I shall go with regret, but certainly not with fear.' And he took off his clothes, begging the others to do the same, not that they could save themselves amidst such waves.

'It is every man's duty to endeavour to preserve the life God has given him; so I advise you all to strip: swimming, indeed, can be of little use in these billows; but as children, when tired with crying, sink placidly to repose, we, when exhausted with struggling, shall die the easier. . . .'

He then sat down, folding his arms, very calm; he even joked with the captain, who was putting his dollars into his waistcoat pocket. . . . The ship approached the rocks. All this time Byron was not seen to change countenance. A man thus tried and moulded could paint extreme situations and sentiments. After all, they are never painted

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 345.

otherwise than thus, by experience. The most inventive—Dante and Shakspeare—though quite different, yet do the same thing. However high their genius rose, it always had its feet in observation; and their most foolish, like their most splendid pictures, never offer to the world more than an image of their age, or of their own heart. At most, they *deduce;* that is, having derived from two or three features the inward qualities of the man and of the men around them, they draw thence, by a sudden ratiocination of which they have no consciousness, the varied skein of actions and sentiments. They may be artists, but they are observers. They may invent, but they describe. Their glory does not consist in the display of a phantasmagoria, but in the discovery of a truth. They are the first to enter some unexplored province of humanity, which becomes their domain, and thenceforth supports their name like an appanage. Byron found his domain, which is that of sad and tender sentiments: it is a wild heath, and full of ruins; but he is at home there, and he is alone.

What an abode! And it is on this desolation that he dwells. He muses on it. See the brothers of Childe Harold pass—the characters who people it. One in his prison, chained up with the two brothers remaining to him. Three others, with their father, perished fighting, or were burnt for their faith. One by one, before the eyes of the eldest, the last two languish and fade: a silent and slow agony in the damp darkness, into which a beam of the sickly sun pierces through a crevice. After the death of the first, the survivors demand that he shall at least be buried on a spot 'whereon the day might shine.' The jailers

> 'Coldly laugh, and laid him there:
> The flat and turfless earth above
> The being we so much did love;
> His empty chain above it leant.
> . . . He faded. . . .
> With all the while a cheek whose bloom
> Was as mockery of the tomb,
> Whose tints as gently sunk away
> As a departing rainbow's ray.'[1]

The pillars are too far apart,—the brother cannot approach the dying man; he listens and hears the failing sighs; he cries for succour, and none comes. He breaks his chain with a vast effort: all is over. He takes that cold hand, and then, before the motionless body, his senses are stopped up, his thoughts arrested, he is like a drowning man, who, after passing through anguish, lets himself sink down like a stone, and no longer feels existence but by a complete petrifaction of horror. Here is another brother of Childe Harold, Mazeppa, bound naked, and on a wild horse rushing over the steppes. He writhes, and his

[1] Byron's Works, x., *The Prisoner of Chillon*, c. vii. and viii.

swollen limbs, cut by the cords, are bleeding. A whole day the course continues, and behind him the wolves are howling. The night through he hears their long monotonous chase, and at the end his energy fails.

'. . . The earth gave way, the skies roll'd round,
I seem'd to sink upon the ground;
But err'd, for I was fastly bound.
My heart turn'd sick, my brain grew sore
And throbb'd awhile, then beat no more;
The skies spun like a mighty wheel;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
Which saw no further: he who dies
Can die no more than then I died. . .
I felt the blackness come and go,
And strove to wake; but could not make
My senses climb up from below:
I felt as on a plank at sea,
When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
At the same time upheave and whelm,
And hurl thee towards a desert realm.' [1]

Should I enumerate them all? Hugo, Parisina, the Foscari, the Giaour, the Corsair. His hero is always a man striving with the worst anguish, face to face with shipwreck, torture, death,—his own painful and prolonged death, the bitter death of his well-beloved, remorse for his companion, amidst the gloomy prospects of a threatening eternity, with no support but native energy and hardened pride. They have desired too much, too impetuously, with a senseless swing, like a horse which does not feel the bit, and thenceforth their inner doom drives them to the abyss which they see, and cannot escape. What a night was that of Alp before Corinth! He is a renegade, and comes with the Mussulmans to besiege the Christians, his old friends—Minotti, the father of the girl he loves. Next day he is to lead the assault, and he thinks of his death, which he forebodes, the carnage of his own people, which he is preparing. There is no inner support but rooted resentment and the fixity of stern will. The Mussulmans despise him, the Christians execrate him, and his glory only publishes his treason. Oppressed and fevered, he passes through the sleeping camp, and wanders on the shore:

'Tis midnight: on the mountains brown
The cold, round moon shines deeply down;
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light. . . .
The waves on either shore lay there
Calm, clear and azure as the air;

[1] Byron's Works, xi., *Mazeppa*, c. xiii. 167.

And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,
But murmur'd meekly as the brook.
The winds were pillow'd on the waves;
The banners droop'd along their staves.
And that deep silence was unbroke,
Save where the watch his signal spoke,
Save where the steed neigh'd oft and shrill,
And the wide hum of that wild host
Rustled like leaves from coast to coast.'

How the heart sickens before such spectacles! What a contrast between his agony and the peace of immortal nature! How man stretches then his arms towards ideal beauty, and how impotently they fall back at the contact of our clay and immortality! Alp advances over the sandy shore to the foot of the bastion, under the fire of the sentinels; and he hardly thinks of it:

'And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall
Hold o'er the dead their carnival,
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb
They were too busy to bark at him!
From a Tartar's skull they had stripped the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;
And their white tusks crunch'd o'er the whiter skull,
As it slipp'd through their jaws, when their edge grew dull
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed;
So well had they broken a lingering fast
With those who had fallen for that night's repast.
And Alp knew, by the turbans that roll'd on the sand,
The foremost of these were the best of his band:
Crimson and green were the shawls of their wear,
And each scalp had a single long tuft of hair,
All the rest was shaven and bare.
The scalps were in the wild dog's maw,
The hair was tangled round his jaw.
But close by the shore, on the edge of the gulf,
There sat a vulture flapping a wolf,
Who had stolen from the hills, but kept away,
Scared by the dogs, from the human prey;
But he seized on his share of a steed that lay,
Picked by the birds, on the sands of the bay.'[2]

Such is the goal of man; the hot frenzy of life ends here; buried or not, it matters little: vultures or jackals, his gravediggers know their work. The storm of his rages and his efforts have only served to cast him to these for their food, and to their beaks and jaws he comes only with the sentiment of frustrated hopes and insatiate desires. Could any of us forget the death of Lara after once reading it? Has any

[1] Byron's Works, x., *The Siege of Corinth*, c. xi. 116. [2] *Ibid.* c. xvi. 123.

one elsewhere seen, save in Shakspeare, a sadder picture of the destiny of a man vainly rearing against inevitable fate? Though generous, like Macbeth, he has, like Macbeth, dared everything against law and conscience, even against pity and the commonest honour. Crimes committed have forced him into other crimes, and blood poured out has made him glide into a pool of blood. As a corsair, he has slain; as a cut-throat, he assassinates; and the old murders which haunt his dreams come with their bat's-wings beating against the doors of his brain He does not drive them away, these black visitors; though the mouth remains silent, the pallid brow and strange smile bear witness to their approach. And yet it is a noble spectacle to see man standing with calm countenance even under their touch. The last day comes, and six inches of iron suffice for all this energy and fury. Lara is lying beneath a lime tree, and his wound 'is bleeding fast from life away.' With each convulsion the stream gushes blacker, then stops; the blood flows drop by drop, and his brow is already moist, his eye dim. The victors arrive—he does not deign to answer them; the priest brings near the absolving cross, 'but he look'd upon it with an eye profane.' What remains to him of life is for his poor page, the only being who has loved him, who has followed him to the end, who now tries to stanch the blood from his wound:

'He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,
He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page. .
His dying tones are in that other tongue,
To which some strange remembrance wildly clung. . .
And once, as Kaled's answering accents ceased,
Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East:
Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
Roll'd back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
Or that 'twas chance, or some remember'd scene,
That raised his arm to point where such had been,
Scarce Kaled seem'd to know, but turn'd away,
As if his heart abhorr'd that coming day,
And shrunk his glance before that morning light,
To look on Lara's brow—where all grew night. . . .
But from his visage little could we guess,
So unrepentant, dark, and passionless. . .
But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,
And dull the film along his dim eye grew;
His limbs stretch'd fluttering, and his head droop'd o'er.'[1]

All is over, and of this haughty spirit there remains but a poor piece of clay. After all, it is the desirable lot of such hearts; they have spent life amiss, and rest well only in the tomb.

A strange and altogether northern poetry, with its root in the Edda

[1] Byron's Works. x.; *Lara*, c. 2, st. 17–20 60.

and its flower in Shakspeare, born long ago under an inclement sky, on the shores of a stormy ocean,—the work of a too wilful, too strong, too sombre race,—and which, after lavishing its images of desolation and heroism, ends by stretching like a black veil over the whole of living nature the dream of universal destruction: this dream is here as in the Edda, almost equally grand:

'I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day. . .
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black. . . .
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face. . .
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead

Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died.' [1] .

IV.

Amongst these immoderate and funereal poems, which incessantly return and insist upon the same subject, there is one more imposing and lofty, *Manfred*, twin-brother of the greatest poem of the age, Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe says of Byron: 'This singular intellectual poet has taken my Faustus to himself, and extracted from it the strongest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour. He has made use of the impelling principles in his own way, for his own purposes, so that no one of them remains the same; and it is particularly on this account that I cannot enough admire his genius.' The play is indeed original. Byron writes:

'His (Goethe's) *Faust* I never read, for I don't know German; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816, at Coligny, translated most of it to me *viva voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it; but it was the *Steinbach* and the *Jungfrau*, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*.' [2]

Goethe adds: 'The whole is so completely formed anew, that it would be an interesting task for the critic to point out not only the alterations he (Byron) has made, but their degree of resemblance with, or dissimilarity to, the original.' Let us speak of it, then, quite at leisure: the subject here is the dominant idea of the age, expressed so as to display the contrast of two masters and of two nations.

What constitutes Goethe's glory is, that in the nineteenth century he could produce an epic poem—I mean a poem in which genuine gods act and speak. This appeared impossible in the nineteenth century, since the special work of our age is the refined consideration of creative ideas, and the suppression of the poetic characters by which other ages have never failed to represent them. Of the two divine

[1] Byron's Works, x.; *Darkness*, 283.

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 321; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, June 1, 1820.

families, the Greek and the Christian, neither seemed capable of re-entering the epic world. Classic literature had dragged down in its fall the mythological puppets, and the old gods slept on their old Olympus, whither history and archæology alone might go and arouse them. The angels and saints of the Middle-age, as strange and almost as distant, were asleep on the vellum of their missals and in the niches of their cathedrals; and if a poet, like Chateaubriand, tried to make them enter the modern world,[1] he succeeded only in degrading them to the functions of vestry decorations and operatic machinery. The mythic credulity had disappeared in the growth of experience, the mystic in the growth of prosperity. Paganism, at the contact of science, was reduced to the recognition of natural forces; Christianity, at the contact of morality, was reduced to the adoration of the ideal. In order again to deify physical powers, man should have become once more a healthy child, as in Homer's time. In order again to deify spiritual powers, man must have become once more a sickly child, as in Dante's time. But he was an adult, and could not remount to the civilisations, or the epics, from which the current of his thought and his existence had withdrawn him for ever. How show him his gods, the modern gods? how reclothe them for him in a personal and sensible form, since it was precisely of all personal and sensible form that he had toiled and succeeded in despoiling them? Instead of rejecting legend, Goethe resumed it. He chose a mediæval story for his theme. Carefully, scrupulously he followed the track of the old manners and the old beliefs: an alchemist's laboratory, a sorcerer's conjuring-book, coarse villagers, students' or drunkards' gaiety, a witches' meeting on the Brocken, mass in the church; you might fancy you saw an engraving of Luther's time, conscientious and minute: nothing is omitted. Heavenly characters appear in consecrated attitudes, after the text of Scripture, like the old mysteries: the Lord with his angels, then with the devil, who comes to ask permission to tempt Faust, as formerly he tempted Job; heaven, as St. Francis imagined it and Van Eyck painted it, with anchorites, holy women and doctors—some in a landscape with blue-grey rocks, others above in the sublime air, about the glorious Virgin, region beyond region, hovering in choirs. Goethe pushes the affectation of orthodoxy so far as to write under each his Latin name, and his due niche in the Vulgate.[2] And this very fidelity proclaims him a sceptic. We see that if he resuscitates the ancient world, it is as a historian, not as a believer. He is only a Christian through remembrance and poetic feeling. In him the modern spirit overflows designedly the narrow vessel into which he designedly seems to enclose it.

[1] The angel of holy loves, the angel of the ocean, the choirs of happy spirits. See this at length in the *Martyrs*.

[2] *Magna peccatrix*, S. Lucæ, vii. 36; *Mulier Samaritana*, S. Johannis, iv *Maria Ægyptiaca* (Acta Sanctorum), etc.

The thinker penetrates through the narrator. At every instant a calculated word, which seems involuntary, opens up beyond the veils of tradition, glimpses of philosophy. Who are they, these supernaturals, —this god, this Mephistopheles, these angels? Their substance incessantly dissolves and re-forms, to show or hide alternately the idea which fills it. Are they abstractions or characters? Mephistopheles, revolutionary and philosopher, who has read *Candide*, and cynically jeers at the Powers,—is he anything but the 'spirit of negation?'

The angels

> 'Rejoice to share
> The wealth exuberant of all that's fair,
> Which lives, and has its being everywhere!
> And the creative essence which surrounds,
> And lives in all, and worketh evermore,
> Encompass . . . within love's gracious bounds;
> And all the world of things, which flit before
> The gaze in seeming fitful and obscure,
> Do . . . in lasting thoughts embody and secure.'[1]

Are these angels, for an instant at least, anything else than the ideal intelligence which comes, through sympathy, to love all, and through ideas to comprehend all? What shall we say of this Deity, at first biblical and individual, who little by little is unshaped, vanishes, and, sinking to the depths, behind the splendours of living nature and mystic reverie, is confused with the inaccessible absolute? Thus is the whole poem unfolded, action and characters, men and gods, antiquity and Middle-age, aggregate and details, always on the limits of two worlds—one sensitive and figurative, the other intelligible and formless; one comprehending the moving externals of history or of life, and all that hued and perfumed bloom which nature lavishes on the surface of existence, the other containing the profound generative powers and invisible fixed laws by which all these living beings come to the light of day.[2] At last see them, our gods: we no longer parody them, like our ancestors, by idols or persons; we perceive them as they are in themselves, and we need not for this renounce poetry, nor break with the past. We remain on our knees before the shrines where men have prayed for three thousand years; we do not tear a single rose from the chaplets with which they have crowned their divine Madonnas; we do not extinguish a single candle which they have crowded on the altar steps; we behold with an artist's pleasure the precious shrines where, amidst the wrought candlesticks, the suns of diamonds, the gorgeous copes, they have scattered the purest treasures of their genius and their heart. But our thought pierces further than our eyes. For us, at certain moments, these draperies, this marble, all this pomp vacillates; it is

[1] Goethe's *Faust*, translated by Theodore Martin. *Prologue in Heaven.*

[2] Goethe sings: 'Wer ruft das Einselne zur allgemeinen Weihe
Wo es in herrlichen Accorden schlägt?'

no longer aught but beautiful phantoms; it is dispersed in the smoke, and we discover through it and behind it the impalpable ideal, which has set up these pillars, lighted these roofs, and hovered for centuries over the kneeling multitude.

To understand the legend and also to understand life, is the object of this work, and of the whole work of Goethe. Everything, brute or rational, vile or sublime, fantastic or tangible, is a group of powers, of which our mind, through study and sympathy, may reproduce in itself the elements and the disposition. Let us reproduce it, and give it in our thought a new existence. Is a gossip like Martha, babbling and foolish—a drunkard like Frosch, brawling and dirty, and the rest of the Dutch boors—unworthy to enter a picture? Even the female apes, and the apes who sit beside the cauldron, watching that it does not boil over, with their hoarse cries and disordered fancies, may repay the trouble of art in restoring them. Wherever there is life, even bestial or maniacal, there is beauty. The more we look upon nature, the more we find it divine—divine even in rocks and plants. Consider these forests, they seem motionless; but the leaves breathe, and the sap mounts insensibly through the massive trunks and branches, to the slender shoots stretched like fingers at the end of the twigs; it fills the swollen ducts, leaks out in living forms, loads the frail aments with fecund dust, spreads profusely through the air which ferments the vapours and odours: this luminous air, this dome of verdure, this long colonnade of trunks of trees, this silent soil, labour and are transformed; they accomplish a work, and the poet's heart has but to listen to them to find a voice for their obscure instincts. They speak in his heart; still better, they sing, and other beings do the same; each, by its distinct melody, short or long, strange or simple, alone adapted to its nature, capable of manifesting it fully, like a sound, by its pitch, its height, its force, manifests the inner bodily structure, which has produced it. This melody the poet respects; he avoids altering it by the confusion of its ideas or accent; his whole care is to keep it intact and pure. Thus is his work produced, an echo of universal nature, a vast chorus in which gods, men, past, present, all periods of history, all conditions of life, all orders of existence agree without confusion, and in which the flexible genius of the musician, who is alternately transformed into each one of them to interpret and comprehend them, only bears witness to his own thought in giving an insight, beyond this immense harmony, into the group of ideal laws whence it is derived, and the inner reason which sustains it.

Beside this lofty conception, what is the supernatural part of Manfred? Doubtless Byron is moved by the great things of nature; he leaves the Alps; he has seen those glaciers which are like 'a frozen hurricane,'—those 'torrents which roll the sheeted silver's waving column o'er the crag's headlong perpendicular, like the pale courser's tail, as told in the Apocalypse,'—but he has brought nothing from them but

images. His witch, his spirits, his Arimanes, are but stage gods. He believes in them no more than we do. It is wholly otherwise with genuine gods: we must believe them; we must, like Goethe, have assisted long at their birth, like philosophers and scholars; we must have seen of them more than their externals. He who, whilst continuing a poet, becomes a naturalist and geologist, who has followed in the fissures of the rocks the tortuous waters slowly distilled, and driven at length by their own weight to the light, may ask himself, as the Greeks did formerly, when they saw them roll and sparkle in their emerald tints, what they might be thinking, whether they thought. What a strange life is theirs, alternately at rest and in violence! How far removed from ours! With what effort must we tear ourselves from our old and complicated passions, to comprehend the divine youth and simplicity of a being enfranchised from reflection and form! How difficult is such a work for a modern man! How impossible for an Englishman! Shelley, Keats approached it,—thanks to the nervous delicacy of their sickly or overflowing imagination; but how partial still was this approach! And how we feel, on reading them, that they would have needed the aid of public culture, and the aptitude of national genius, which Goethe possessed! That which the whole of civilisation has alone developed in the Englishman, is energetic will and practical faculties. Here man has braced himself up in his efforts, become concentrated in resistance, fond of action, and hence shut out from pure speculation, from wavering sympathy, and from disinterested art. In him metaphysical liberty has perished under utilitarian preoccupation, and pantheistic reverie under moral prejudices. How would he frame to bend his imagination so as to pursue the numberless and fugitive outlines of existences, especially of vague existences? How would he frame to leave his religion so as to reproduce indifferently the powers of indifferent nature? And who is further from flexibility and indifference than he? The flowing water, which in Goethe takes the mould of all the contours of the earth, and which we perceive in the sinuous and luminous distance beneath the golden mist which it exhales, was in Byron suddenly struck into a mass of ice, and makes but a rigid block of crystal. Here, as elsewhere, there is but one character, the same as before. Men, gods, nature, all the changing and multiplex world of Goethe, has vanished. The poet alone subsists, as expressed in his character. Inevitably imprisoned within himself, he could see nothing but himself; if he must come to other existences, it is that they may reply to him; and through this pretended epic he persisted in his eternal monologue.

But again, how all these powers, assembled in a single being, make him great! Into what mediocrity and platitude sinks the *Faust* of Goethe, compared to *Manfred!* As soon as we cease to see humanity in this *Faust*, what does he become? Is he a hero? A sad hero, who has no other task but to speak, to fear, to study the shades of his sen

sations, and to walk about! His worst action is to seduce a grisette, and to go and dance by night in bad company—two exploits which many a German student has accomplished. His wilfulness is whims, his ideas are longings and dreams. A poet's soul in a scholar's head, both unfit for action, and according ill together; discord within, and weakness without; in short, character is wanting: it is the German character By his side, what a man is Manfred! He is a man; there is no finer word, or one which could depict him better. He will not, at the sight of a spirit, 'quake like a crawling, cowering, timorous worm.' He will not regret that 'he has neither land, nor pence, nor worldly honours, nor influence.' He will not let himself be duped by the devil like a schoolboy, or go and amuse himself like a cockney with the phantasmagoria of the Brocken. He has lived like a feudal chief, not like a scholar who has taken his degree; he has fought, mastered others; he knows how to master himself. If he is forced into magic arts, it is not from an alchemist's curiosity, but from a spirit of revolt:

'From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh. . . .
My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe,
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insects wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite, or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave. . .
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim
Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. . . .[1]
I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and sue—
And watch all time—and pry into all place—
And be a living lie—who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves. . . .[2]

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 2. 32. [2] *Ibid.*; *Manfred*, iii. 1. 56.

He lives alone, and he cannot live alone. The deep source of love, cut off from its natural issues, then overflows and lays waste the heart which refused to expand. He has loved, too well, too near to him, his sister it may be; she has died of it, and impotent remorse has come to fill the soul which no human occupation could satisfy:

'. . . My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless—the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break.
In fantasy, imagination, all
The affluence of my soul. . . . I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dashed me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought. . . .
I dwell in my despair,
And live, and live for ever.'[1]

Let him see her once more: to this sole and all-powerful desire flow all the energies of his soul. He calls her up in the midst of spirits; she appears, but answers not. He prays to her—with what cries, what grievous cries of deep anguish! How he loves! With what yearning and effort all his downtrodden and outcrushed tenderness gushes out and escapes at the sight of those well-beloved eyes, which he sees for the last time! With what enthusiasm his convulsive arms are stretched towards that frail form which, shuddering, has quitted the tomb! —towards those cheeks in which the blood, forcibly recalled, plants 'a strange hectic—like the unnatural red which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.'

'. . . Hear me, hear me—
Astarte! my beloved! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 2. 35,

I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art—and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all. . . .
Speak to me! I have wander'd o er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!'[1]

She speaks. What a sad and doubtful reply! and convulsions spread through Manfred's limbs when she disappears. But an instant after the spirits see that

'. . . He mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.'[2]

Will is the unshaken basis of this soul. He did not bend before the chief of the spirits; he stood firm and calm before the infernal throne, under the rage of all the demons who would tear him to pieces: now that he dies, and they assail him, he still strives and conquers:

'. . . Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Is its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time—its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without;
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!'[3]

This 'I,' the invincible I, who suffices to himself, whom nothing can

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 4. 47. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 4. 49. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 4. 70

hold, demons nor men, the sole author of his own good and ill, a sort of suffering or fallen god, but god always, even in its torn flesh, through the mire and bruises of all his destinies,—such is the hero and the work of this mind, and of the men of his race. If Goethe was the poet of the *universe*, Byron was the poet of the *individual;* and if in one the German genius found its interpreter, the English genius found its interpreter in the other.

V.

We can well imagine that Englishmen clamoured, and repudiated the monster. Southey, poet-laureate, said of him, in a fine biblical style, that he savoured of Moloch and Belial—most of all, of Satan; and, with the generosity of a fellow-literary man, called the attention of Government to him. We should fill many pages, if we were to copy the reproaches of the respectable reviews against these 'men of diseased hearts and depraved imaginations, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society; and, hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul.'[1] This sounds like the emphasis of an episcopal charge and of scholastic pedantry: in England the press does the duty of the police, and it never did it more violently than at that time. Opinion backed the press. Several times, in Italy, Lord Byron saw gentlemen leave a drawing-room with their wives, when he was announced. Owing to his title and celebrity, the scandal which he caused was more prominent than any other: he was a public sinner. One day an obscure parson sent him a prayer which he had found amongst the papers of his wife—a charming and pious lady, recently dead, and who had secretly prayed to God for the conversion of the great sinner. Conservative and Protestant England, after a quarter of a century of moral wars, and two centuries of moral education, had pushed its severity and rigour to extremes; and Puritan intolerance, like Catholic intolerance previously in Spain, put recusants out of the pale of the law. The proscription of voluptuous or abandoned life, the narrow observation of order and decency, the respect of all police, human and divine; the necessary bows at the mere name of Pitt, of the king, the church, the God of the Bible; the attitude of the gentleman in a white tie, conventional, inflexible, implacable,—such were the customs then met with across the Channel, a hundred times more tyrannical than now-a-days: at that time, as Stendhal says, a peer at his fireside dared not cross his legs, for fear of its being improper. England held herself stiff, uncomfortably laced in her stays of decorum. Hence arose two sources of misery: a man suffers, and

[1] Southey, Preface to *A Vision of Judgment*

is tempted to throw down the ugly choking apparatus, when convinced he is alone. On one side constraint, on the other hypocrisy—these are the two vices of English civilisation; and it was these which Byron, with his poet's discernment and his combative instincts, attacked.

He had seen them from the first; true artists are perspicacious: it is in this that they outstrip us; we judge from hearsay and formulas, like cockneys; they, like eccentric beings, from accomplished facts, and things: at twenty-two he perceived the tedium born of constraint desolating all high life:

> 'There stands the noble hostess, nor shall sink
> With the three-thousandth curtsy; . . .
> Saloon, room, hall, o'erflow beyond their brink,
> And long the latest of arrivals halts,
> 'Midst royal dukes and dames condemn'd to climb,
> And gain an inch of staircase at a time.'[1]

He also sneered in his letters at the distinguished company in the country, and at the conduct of gentlemen after dinner—above all, on hunting days. Most of them fall asleep. As for the morals of the upper classes, this is what he says:

'Went to my box at Covent Garden to-night. . . . Casting my eyes round the house, in the next box to me, and the next, and the next, were the most distinguished old and young Babylonians of quality. . . . It was as if the house had been divided between your public and your understood courtesans;—but the intriguantes much outnumbered the regular mercenaries. Now, where lay the difference between Pauline and her mother, . . . and Lady * * and daughter? except that the two last may enter Carlton and any other house, and the two first are limited to the Opera and b— house. How I do delight in observing life as it really is!—and myself, after all, the worst of any!'[2]

Decorum and debauchery; moral hypocrites, 'qui mettent leurs vertus en mettant leurs gants blancs;'[3] an oligarchy which, to preserve its dignities and its sinecures, ravages Europe, preys on Ireland, and holds in the mob by high words of virtue, Christianity, and liberty: there was truth in all these invectives.[4] It is only thirty years since the ascendency of the middle class has diminished the privileges and corruptions of the great; but at that time rude words could be thrown at their heads. Byron said, quoting from Voltaire:

'"La Pudeur s'est enfuie des cœurs, et s'est refugiée sur les lèvres." . . . "Plus les mœurs sont dépravées, plus les expressions deviennent mesurées; on croit regagner en langage ce qu'on a perdu en vertu." This is the real fact, as applicable to the degraded and hypocritical mass which leavens the present English generation; and it is the only answer they deserve. . . . *Cant* is the crying sin of this double-dealing and false-speaking time of selfish spoilers.'[5]

[1] Byron's Works, xvii.; *Don Juan*, c. 11, st. lxvii.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 304; *Journal*, Dec. 17, 1813.

[3] Alfred de Musset.

[4] See his terrible satirical poem, *The Vision of Judgment*, against Southey. George IV., and official pomp.

[5] Byron's Works, xvi. 131; Preface to *Don Juan*, cantos vi. vii. and viii.

And then he wrote his masterpiece, *Don Juan*.[1]

All here was new, form and foundation; for he had entered into a new world. The Englishman, the Northman, transplanted amongst southern manners and into Italian life, had become imbued with a new sap, which made him bear new fruit. He had been induced to read[2] the rather free satires of Buratti, and the still more voluptuous sonnets of Baffo. He lived in the happy Venetian society, still exempt from political animosities, where care seemed a folly, where life was looked upon as a carnival, pleasure ran through the streets, not timid and hypocritical, but loosely arrayed and commended. He had amused himself here, hotly at first, more than sufficient, and even more than too much, almost with the effect of killing himself; but after vulgar gallantries, having entered upon a genuine love, he had become a *cavalier' servente*, after the fashion of the land, with the consent of the family, offering his arm, carrying a shawl, a little awkwardly at first, and wonderingly, but on the whole happier than he had ever been, and fanned by a warm breath of pleasure and *abandon*. He had seen the overthrow of all English morality, conjugal infidelity established as a rule, amorous fidelity raised to a duty:

'There is no convincing a woman here that she is in the smallest degree deviating from the rule of right or the fitness of things in having an *amoroso*.[3] . . . Love (the sentiment of love) is not merely an excuse for it, but makes it an actual virtue, provided it is disinterested, and not a caprice, and is confined to one object.'[4]

A little later he translated the *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci, to show

'What was permitted in a Catholic country and a bigoted age to a churchman on the score of religion, and to silence those buffoons who accuse me of attacking the Liturgy.'[5]

He rejoiced in this liberty and this ease, and resolved never to fall again under the pedantic inquisition, which in his country had condemned and damned him past forgiveness. He wrote his *Beppo* like an improvisatore, with a charming freedom, a flowing and fantastic lightness of mood, and contrasted in it the recklessness and happiness of Italy with the prejudices and repulsiveness of England:

'I like . . . to see the Sun set, sure he'll rise to-morrow,
Not through a misty morning twinkling weak as
A drunken man's dead eye in maudlin sorrow,
But with all Heaven t' himself; that day will break as
Beauteous as cloudless, nor be forced to borrow
That sort of farthing candlelight which glimmers
Where reeking London's smoky caldron simmers.

[1] *Don Juan* is a satire on the abuses in the present state of society, and not a eulogy of vice.

[2] Stendhal, *Mémoires sur Lord Byron*.

[3] Byron's Works, iii. 333; Letter to Murray, Venice, Jan. 2, 1817.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 363; Letter to Moore, Venice. March 25, 1817.

[5] *Ibid.* iv. 279; Letter to Murray, Ravenna, Feb. 7, 1820.

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
Which sounds as if it should be writ on satin,
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South,
And gentle liquids gliding all so pat in,
That not a single accent seems uncouth,
Like our harsh northern whistling, grunting guttural,
Which we're obliged to hiss, and spit, and sputter all.

I like the women too (forgive my folly),
From the rich peasant cheek of ruddy bronze,
And large black eyes that flash on you a volley
Of rays that say a thousand things at once,
To the high dama's brow, more melancholy,
But clear, and with a wild and liquid glance,
Heart on her lips, and soul within her eyes,
Soft as her clime, and sunny as her skies.'[1]

With other manners there was here another morality; there is one for every age, race, and sky—I mean that the ideal model varies with the circumstances which fashion it. In England the severity of the climate, the warlike energy of the race, and the liberty of the institutions prescribe an active life, strict manners, Puritan religion, the marriage bond, the sentiment of duty and self-command. In Italy the beauty of the climate, the innate sense of the beautiful, and the despotism of the government induced a leisurely life, relaxed manners, imaginative religion, the culture of the arts, and the study of happiness. Each model has its beauties and its blots,—the epicurean artist like the political moralist;[2] each shows by its greatnesses the littlenesses of the other, and, to set in relief the disadvantages of the second, Lord Byron had only to set in relief the seductions of the first.

Thereupon he went in search of a hero, and did not find one, which, in this age of heroes, is 'an uncommon want.' For lack of a better he chose 'our ancient friend Don Juan,'—a scandalous choice: what an outcry the English moralists will make! But, to cap the horror, this Don Juan is not wicked, selfish, odious, like his fellows; he does not seduce, he is no corrupter. When the occasion rises, he lets himself drift; he has a heart and senses, and, under a beautiful sun, all this feels itself drawn out: at sixteen a youth cannot help himself, nor at twenty, nor perhaps at thirty. Lay it to the charge of human nature, my dear moralists; it is not I who made it as it is. If you will grumble, address yourselves higher: here we are painters, not makers of human puppets, and we do not answer for the structure of our dancing-dolls. Look, then, at our Juan as he goes along; he goes about in many places, and in all he is young; we will not strike him with thunder, therefore;

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Beppo*, c. xliii.–xlv. 121.

[2] See Stendhal, *Vie de Giacomo Rossini*, and Stanley's *Life of D'Arnold* The contrast is complete. See also in *Corinne*, where this opposition is very clearly grasped.

that fashion is past: the green devils and their capers only come on the stage in the last act of Mozart. And, moreover, Juan is so amiable! After all, what has he done that others don't do? If he has been a lover of Catherine II., he only followed the lead of the diplomatic corps and the whole Russian army. Let him sow his wild oats; the good grain will spring up in its time. Once in England, he will behave himself decently. I confess that he may even there, when provoked, go a gleaning in the conjugal gardens of the aristocracy; but in the end he will settle, go and pronounce moral speeches in Parliament, become a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. If you wish absolutely to have him punished, we will make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage, not knowing which would be the severest. The Spanish tradition says hell; but it probably is only an allegory of the other state.[1]

At all events, married or damned, the good folk at the end of the piece will have the pleasure of knowing that he is burning all alive.

Is it not a singular apology? Would it not aggravate the fault? Wait; you know not yet the whole venom of the book: together with Juan there are Donna Julia, Haidee, Gulbeyaz, Dudu, and the rest. It is here the diabolical poet digs in his sharpest claw, and he takes care to dig it into our foibles. What will the clergymen and white-chokered reviewers say? For, in short, there is no preventing it: we must read, in spite of ourselves. Twice or three times following we meet here with *happiness;* and when I say happiness, I mean profound and complete happiness—not mere voluptuousness, not obscene gaiety: we are miles away from the pretty rascalities of Dorat, and the unbridled licence of Rochester. Beauty is here, southern beauty, sparkling and harmonious, spread over everything, over the luminous sky, the calm scenery, corporal nudity, freshness of heart. Is there a thing it does not deify? All sentiments are exalted under his hands. What was gross becomes noble; even in the nocturnal adventure in the seraglio, which seems worthy of Faublas, poetry embellishes licentiousness. The girls are lying in the large silent apartment, like precious flowers brought from all climates into a conservatory:

> 'One with her flush'd cheek laid on her white arm,
> And raven ringlets gather'd in dark crowd
> Above her brow, lay dreaming soft and warm; . . .
> One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
> And fair brows gently drooping, as the fruit
> Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath,
> And lips apart, which show'd the pearls beneath. . . .
> A fourth as marble, statue-like and still,
> Lay in a breathless, hush'd, and stony sleep;
> White, cold, and pure . . a carved lady on a monument.'[2]

[1] Byron's Works, v. 127; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, Feb. 16, 1821.

[2] *Ibid.* xvi.; *Don Juan*, c. vi. st. lxvi. lxviii.

However, 'the fading lamps waned dim and blue;' Dudu is asleep, the innocent girl; and if she has cast a glance on her glass,

> 'Twas like the fawn, which, in the lake display'd,
> Beholds her own shy, shadowy image pass,
> When first she starts, and then returns to peep,
> Admiring this new native of the deep.'[1]

What will become now of Puritan prudery? Can the proprieties prevent beauty from being beautiful? Will you condemn a Titian for its nudity? What gives a value to human life, and a nobility to human nature, if not the power of attaining delicious and sublime emotions? You have just had one—one worthy of a painter; is it not worth that of an alderman? Will you refuse to acknowledge the divine because it appears in art and enjoyment, and not only in conscience and action? There is a world beside yours, and a civilisation beside yours; your rules are narrow, and your pedantry pedantic; the human plant can be otherwise developed than in your compartments and under your snows, and the fruits it will then bear will not be less precious. You must confess it, since you relish them when they are offered you. Who has read the love of Haidee, and has had any other thought than to envy and pity her? She is a wild child who has picked up Juan—another child cast ashore senseless by the waves. She has preserved him, nursed him like a mother, and now she loves him: who can blame her for loving him? Who, in presence of the splendid nature which smiles on and protects them, can imagine for them anything else than the all-powerful feeling which unites them·

> 'It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
> With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
> Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host, . . .
> And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
> Save on the dead long summer days, which make
> The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake. . . .
>
> And all was stillness, save the sea-bird's cry,
> And dolphin's leap, and little billow crost
> By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
> Against the boundary it scarcely wet. . . .
>
> And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
> Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
> Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
> And in the worn and wild receptacles
> Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd,
> In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
> They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
> Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

[1] Byron's Works, *Don Juan*, c. vi. st. lx.

They look'd up to the sky whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the wave's splash, and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss. . . .

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.'[1]

An excellent opportunity to introduce here your formularies and catechisms:

'Haidée spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
Nor offer'd any . . .
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird.'[2]

Nature suddenly expands, for she is ripe, like a bud bursting into bloom, nature in her fulness, instinct, and heart:

'Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity can not annul.'[3] . . .

O admirable moralists, you stand before these two flowers like patented gardeners, holding in your hands the model of bloom sanctioned by your society of horticulture, proving that the model has not been followed, and deciding that the two weeds must be cast into the fire, which you keep burning to consume irregular growths. Well judged: you know your art.

Beyond British cant, there is universal hypocrisy; beyond English pedantry, Byron wars against human roguery. Here is the general aim of the poem, and to this his character and genius tended. His great and gloomy dreams of juvenile imagination have vanished; experience has come; he knows man now; and what is man, once known? Does the sublime abound in him? Do you think that the great sentiments—those of Childe Harold, for instance—are the ordinary course of

[1] Byron's Works, xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. clxxvii–clxxxviii.
[2] *Ibid.* st. cxc. [3] *Ibid.* c. ii. st. cxcii

his life?[1] The truth is, that he employs most of his time in sleeping, dining, yawning, working like a horse, amusing himself like an ape. According to Byron, he is an animal; except for a few minutes, his nerves, his blood, his instincts lead him. Routine works over it all, necessity whips him on, the animal advances. As the animal is proud, and moreover imaginative, it pretends to be marching for its own pleasure, that there is no whip, that at all events this whip rarely touches its flanks, that at least his stoic back can make as if it did not feel it. It is harnessed in imagination with the most splendid trappings, and thus struts on with measured steps, fancying that it carries relics and treads on carpets and flowers, whilst in reality it tramples in the mud, and carries with it the stains and stinks of every dunghill. What a pastime to touch its mangy back, to set before its eyes the sacks full of flour which load it, and the goad which makes it go![2] What a pretty farce! It is the eternal farce; and not a sentiment thereof but provides him with an act: love in the first place. Certainly Donna Julia is very lovable, and Byron loves her; but she comes out of his hands, as rumpled as any other. She has virtue, of course; and better, she desires to have it. She plies herself, in connection with Don Juan, with the finest arguments; a fine thing are arguments, and how proper they are to check passion! Nothing can be more solid than a firm purpose, propped up by logic, resting on the fear of the world, the thought of God, the recollection of duty; nothing can prevail against it, except a *tête-à-tête* in June, on a moonlight evening. At last the deed is done, and the poor timid lady is surprised by her outraged husband; in what a situation! There anent read the book. Of course she will be speechless, ashamed and full of tears, and the moral reader duly reckons on her remorse. My dear reader, you have not reckoned on impulse and nerves. To-morrow she will feel shame; the business is now to overwhelm the husband, to deafen him, to confound him, to save Juan, to save herself, to fight. The war having begun, it is waged with all kinds of weapons, firstly with audacity and insults. The single idea, the present need, absorbs all others: it is in this that woman is a woman. This Julia cries lustily. It is a regular storm: hard words and recriminations, mockery and defiance, fainting and tears. In a quarter of an hour she has gained twenty years' experience. You did not know, nor she either, what an actress can emerge, all on a sudden, unforeseen, out of a simple woman. Do you know what can emerge from yourself? You think yourself rational, human; I admit it for to-day; you have dined, and you are

[1] Byron says (v., Oct. 12, 1820), 'Don Juan is too true, and would, I suspect, live longer than Childe Harold. The women hate many things which strip off the tinsel of sentiment.'

[2] *Don Juan*, c. vii. st. 2. I hope it is no crime to laugh at *all* things. For I wish to know *what*, after *all*, are *all* things—but a *show*?

at ease in a pleasant room. Your machine does its duty without disorder, because the wheels are oiled and well regulated; but place it in a shipwreck, a battle, let the failing or the plethora of blood for an instant derange the chief pieces, and we shall see you howling or drivelling like a madman or an idiot. Civilisation, education, reason, health, cloak us in their smooth and polished cases; let us tear them away one by one, or all together, and we laugh to see the brute, who is lying at the bottom. Here is our friend Juan reading Julia's last letter, and swearing in a transport never to forget the beautiful eyes which he caused to weep so much. Was ever feeling more tender or sincere? But unfortunately Juan is at sea, and sickness sets in. He cries out:

'Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,
Than I resign thine image, oh, my fair! . . .
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick.) . . .
Sooner shall heaven kiss earth—(here he fell sicker.)
Oh Julia! what is every other woe?
(For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor;
Pedro, Battista, help me down below).
Julia, my love!—(You rascal, Pedro, quicker)—
Oh, Julia!—(this curst vessel pitches so)
Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching.) . . .

Love's a capricious power . . .
Against all noble maladies he's bold,
But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet; . . .
Shrinks from the application of hot towels,
And purgatives are dangerous to his reign,
Sea-sickness death.'[1] . . .

Many other things cause the death of Love:

'Tis melancholy, and a fearful sign
Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
That love and marriage rarely can combine,
Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine—
A sad, sour, sober beverage.[2] . . .
An honest gentleman, at his return,
May not have the good fortune of Ulysses; . . .
The odds are that he finds a handsome urn
To his memory—and two or three young misses
Born to some friend, who holds his wife and riches,—
And that *his* Argus bites him by—the breeches.'[3]

These are the words of a sceptic, even of a cynic. Sceptic and cynic, it is in this he ends. Sceptic through misanthropy, cynic through bravado, a sad and combative humour always impels him; southern

[1] Byron's Works, xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. xix.–xxiii.
[2] *Ibid.* c. iii. st. v. [3] *Ibid.* c. iii. st. xxiii.

voluptuousness has not conquered him; he is only an epicurean through contradiction and for a moment:

> 'Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter,
> Sermons and soda-water the day after.
> Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
> The best of life is but intoxication.'[1]

You see clearly that he is always the same, in excess and unhappy, bent on destroying himself. His *Don Juan*, also, is a debauchery; in it he diverts himself outrageously at the expense of all respectable things, as a bull in a china shop. He is always violent, and often ferocious; black imagination brings into his stories horrors leisurely enjoyed, —despair and famine of shipwrecked men, and the emaciation of the raging skeletons feeding on each other. He laughs at it horribly, like Swift; more, he plays the buffoon over it, like Voltaire:

> 'And next they thought upon the master's mate,
> As fattest; but he saved himself, because,
> Besides being much averse from such a fate,
> There were some other reasons: the first was,
> He had been rather indisposed of late;
> And that which chiefly proved his saving clause,
> Was a small present made to him at Cadiz,
> By general subscription of the ladies.'[2]

With his specimens in hand,[3] Byron follows with a surgeon's exactness all the stages of death, satiation, rage, madness, howling, exhaustion, stupor; he wishes to touch and exhibit the naked and ascertained truth, the last grotesque and hideous element of humanity. Look again at the assault on Ismail,—the grape-shot and the bayonet, the street massacres, the corpses used as fascines, and the thirty-eight thousand slaughtered Turks. There is blood enough to satiate a tiger, and this blood flows amidst an accompaniment of jests; it is in order to rail at war, and the butcheries dignified with the name of exploits. In this pitiless and universal demolition of all human vanities, what subsists? What do we know except that life is 'a scene of all-confess'd inanity,' and that men are,

> 'Dogs, or men!—for I flatter you in saying
> That ye are dogs—your betters far—ye may
> Read, or read not, what I am now essaying
> To show ye what ye are in every way?'[4]

What does he find in science but deficiencies, and in religion but mummeries?[5] Does he so much as preserve poetry? Of the divine

[1] Byron's Works. xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. clxxvii clxxix
[2] *Ibid.* c. ii. st. lxxxi.
[3] Byron had before him a dozen authentic descriptions.
[4] Byron's Works, xvi.; *Don Juan*, c. vii. st. 7.
[5] See his *Vision of Judgment*

mantle, the last garment which a poet respects, he makes a rag to stamp upon, to wring, to make holes in, out of sheer wantonness. At the most touching moment of Haidée's love, he vents a buffoonery. He concludes an ode with caricatures. He is Faust in the first verse, and Mephistopheles in the second. He employs, in the midst of tenderness or of murder, penny-print witticisms, trivialities, gossip, with a pamphleteer's vilification and a buffoon's whimsicalities. He lays bare the poetic method, asks himself where he has got to, counts the stanzas already done, jokes the Muse, Pegasus, and the whole epic stud, as though he wouldn't give twopence for them. Again, what remains? Himself, he alone, standing amidst all this ruin. It is he who speaks here; his characters are but screens; half the time even he pushes them aside, to occupy the stage. He lavishes upon us his opinions, recollections, angers, tastes; his poem is a conversation, a confidence, with the ups and downs, the rudeness and freedom of a conversation and a confidence, almost like the olographic journal, in which, by night, at his writing-table, he opened his heart and discharged his feelings. Never was seen in such a clear glass the birth of a lively thought, the tumult of a great genius, the inner life of a genuine poet, always impassioned, inexhaustibly fertile and creative, in whom suddenly, successively, finished and adorned, bloomed all human emotions and ideas,—sad, gay, lofty, low, hustling one another, mutually impeded like swarms of insects who go humming and feeding on flowers and in the mud. He may say what he will; willingly or unwillingly we listen to him; let him leap from sublime to burlesque, we leap then with him. He has so much wit, so fresh a wit, so sudden, so biting, such a prodigality of knowledge, ideas, images picked up from the four corners of the horizon, in heaps and masses, that we are captivated, transported beyond limits; we cannot dream of resisting. Too vigorous, and hence unbridled,—that is the word which ever recurs when we speak of Byron; too vigorous against others and himself, and so unbridled, that after spending his life in braving the world, and his poetry in depicting revolt, he can only find the fulfilment of his talent and the satisfaction of his heart, in a poem in arms against all human and poetic conventions. To live so, a man must be great, but he must also become deranged. There is a derangement of heart and mind in the style of *Don Juan*, as in Swift. When a man jests amidst his tears, it is because he has a poisoned imagination. This kind of laughter is a spasm, and you see in one man a hardening of the heart, or madness; in another, excitement or disgust. Byron was exhausted, at least the poet was exhausted in him. The last cantos of *Don Juan* drag: the gaiety became forced, the escapades became digressions; the reader began to be bored. A new kind of poetry, which he had attempted, had given way in his hands: in the drama he only attained to powerful declamation, his characters had no life; when he forsook poetry, poetry forsook him; he went to Greece in search of action, and only found death.

VI.

So lived and so ended this unhappy great man; the malady of the age had no more distinguished prey. Around him, like a hecatomb, lie the rest, wounded also by the greatness of their faculties and their immoderate desires,—some extinguished in stupor or drunkenness, others worn out by pleasure or work; these driven to madness or suicide; those beaten down by impotence, or lying on a sick-bed; all agitated by their too acute or aching nerves; the strongest carrying their bleeding wound to old age, the happiest having suffered as much as the rest, and preserving their scars, though healed. The concert of their lamentations has filled their age, and we stood around them, hearing in our hearts the low echo of their cries. We were sad like them, and like them inclined to revolt. The institution of democracy excited our ambitions without satisfying them; the proclamation of philosophy kindled our curiosity without contenting it. In this wide-open career, the plebeian suffered for his mediocrity, and the sceptic for his doubt. The plebeian, like the sceptic, attacked by a precocious melancholy, and withered by a premature experience, delivered his sympathies and his conduct to the poets, who declared happiness impossible, truth unattainable, society ill-arranged, man abortive or marred. From this unison of voices an idea sprang, the centre of the literature, the arts, the religion of the age,—that there is, namely, a monstrous disproportion between the different parts of our social structure, and that human destiny is vitiated by this disagreement.

What advice have they given us for its remedy? They were great; were they wise? 'Let deep and strong sensations rain upon you; if your machine breaks, so much the worse!' 'Cultivate your garden, bury yourself in a little circle, re-enter the flock, be a beast of burden. 'Turn believer again, take holy water, abandon your mind to dogmas, and your conduct to handbooks.' 'Make your way; aspire to power, honours, wealth.' Such are the various replies of artists and citizens, Christians, and men of the world. Are they replies? And what do they propose but to satiate one's self, to become beasts, to turn out of the way, to forget? There is another and a deeper answer, which Goethe was the first to give, which we begin to conceive, in which issue all the labour and experience of the age, and which may perhaps be the subject-matter of future literature: 'Try to understand yourself, and things in general.' A strange reply, seeming barely new, whose scope we shall only hereafter discover. For a long time yet men will feel their sympathies thrill at the sound of the sobs of their great poets. For a long time they will rage against a destiny which opens to their aspirations the career of limitless space, to shatter them, within two steps of the goal, against a wretched post which they had not seen. For a long time they will bear like fetters the necessities which they must embrace as laws. Our generation, like the preceding, has been

tainted by the malady of the age, and will never more than half be quit of it. We shall arrive at truth, not at calm. All we can heal at present is our intellect; we have no hold upon our sentiments. But we have a right to conceive for others the hopes which we no longer entertain for ourselves, and to prepare for our descendants the happiness which we shall never enjoy. Brought up in a more wholesome air, they mayhap will have a wholesomer heart. The reformation of ideas ends by reforming the rest, and the light of the mind produces serenity of heart. Hitherto, in our judgments on men, we have taken for our masters the oracles and poets, and like them we have received for certain truths the noble dreams of our imagination and the imperious suggestions of our heart. We have bound ourselves to the partiality of religious divinations, and the inexactness of literary divinations, and we have shaped our doctrines by our instincts and our vexations. Science at last approaches, and approaches man; it has gone beyond the visible and palpable world of stars, stones, plants, amongst which man disdainfully confined her. It reaches the heart, provided with exact and penetrating implements, whose justness has been proved, and their reach measured by three hundred years of experience. Thought, with its development and rank, its structure and relations, its deep material roots, its infinite growth through history, its lofty bloom at the summit of things, becomes the object of science,—an object which, sixty years ago, it foresaw in Germany, and which, slowly and surely probed, by the same methods as the physical world, will be transformed before our eyes, as the physical world has been transformed. It is already being transformed, and we have left behind us the point of view of Byron and our poets. No, man is not an abortion or a monster; no, the business of poetry is not to revolt or defame him. He is in his place, and completes a chain. Let us watch him grow and increase, and we shall cease to rail at or curse him. He, like everything else, is a product, and as such it is right he should be what he is. His innate imperfection is an order, like the constant abortion of a stamen in a plant, like the fundamental irregularity of four facets in a crystal. What we took for a deformity, is a form; what seemed to us the contradiction, is the accomplishment of a law. Human reason and virtue have as their elements animal instincts and images, as living forms have for theirs physical laws, as organic matters have for theirs mineral substances. What wonder if virtue or reason, like living form or organic matter, sometimes fails or decomposes, since like them, and like every superior and complex existence, they have for support and control inferior and simple forces, which, according to circumstances, now maintain it by their harmony, now mar it by their discord? What wonder if the elements of existence, like those of quantity, receive, from their very nature, the irresistible laws which constrain and reduce them to a certain species and order of formation? Who will rise up against geometry? Who,

especially, will rise up against a living geometry? Who will not, on the other hand, feel moved with admiration at the sight of those grand powers which, situated at the heart of things, incessantly urge the blood through the limbs of the old world, disperse the showers in the infinite network of arteries, and spread over the whole surface the eternal flower of youth and beauty? Who, in short, will not feel himself ennobled, when he finds that this pile of laws results in a regular series of forms, that matter has thought for its goal, and that this ideal from which, through so many errors, all the aspirations of men depend, is also the centre whereto converge, through so many obstacles, all the forces of the universe? In this employment of science, and in this conception of things, there is a new art, a new morality, a new polity, a new religion, and it is in the present time our task to discover them.

CHAPTER III.

The Past and the Present.

I. The past—The Saxon invasion—How it established the race and determined the character—The Norman Conquest—How it modified the character and established the Constitution—The Renaissance—How it manifested the national mind—The Reformation—How it fixed the Ideal—The Restoration—How it imported classical culture and diverted the national mind—The Revolution—How it developed classical culture and restored the national mind—The modern age—How European ideas widened the national mould.

II. The present—Concordances of observation and history—Sky—Soil—Products—Man—Commerce—Industry—Agriculture—Society—Family—Arts—Philosophy—Religion—What forces have produced the present civilization, and are working out the future civilization.

§ 1

I.

HAVING reached the limits of this long review, we can now embrace in one prospect the aggregate of English civilisation: everything is connected there: a few powers and a few primitive circumstances have produced the rest, and we have only to pursue their continuous action in order to comprehend the nation and its history, its past and its present. At the beginning, and furthest removed in the region of causes, comes the race. A whole people, Angles and Saxons, destroyed, hunted out, or enslaved the old inhabitants, wiped out the Roman culture, settled themselves alone and pure, and, amongst the later Danish ravagers, only encountered a new reinforcement of the same blood. This is the primitive stock: of its substance and innate properties is to spring almost the whole future growth. At this time, and as they then were, alone in their island, the Angles and Saxons attained a development such as it was, defaced, brutal, and yet solid. They ate and drank, built and cleared ground, and, in particular, multiplied: the scattered tribes who crossed the sea in leather boats, became a strong compact nation,—three hundred thousand families, rich, with store of cattle, abundantly provided with corporal subsistence, partly at rest in the security of social life, with a king, respected and frequent

assemblies, good judicial customs: here, amidst the fire and vehemence of barbarian temperament, the old Germanic fidelity held men in unison, whilst the old Germanic independence held them upright. In all else they barely advanced. A few fragmentary songs, an epic in which still is faintly heard the warlike exaltation of ancient barbarism, gloomy hymns, a harsh and furious poetry, sometimes sublime and always rude,—this is all that remains of them. In six centuries they had scarcely gone one step beyond the manners and sentiments of their uncivilised Germany: Christianity, which obtained a hold on them by the greatness of its biblical tragedies and the troubled sadness of its aspirations, did not bring to them the Latin civilisation: this remained at the door, hardly accepted by a few great men, deformed, when it did enter, by the disproportion of the Roman and Saxon genius—always altered and reduced; so much so, that for the men of the Continent these islanders were but illiterate dullards, drunkards, and gluttons; at all events, savage and slow by mood and nature, rebellious against culture, and sluggish in development.

The empire of this world belongs to force. These people were conquered for ever and permanently,—conquered by Normans, that is, by Frenchmen more clever, more quickly cultivated and organised than they. This is the great event which was to complete their character, decide their history, and impress upon character and history the political and practical spirit which separates them from other German nations. Oppressed, constrained in the stiff net of Norman organisation, although they were conquered, they were not destroyed; they were on their own soil, each with his friends and in his tithings; they formed a body; they were yet twenty times more numerous than their conquerors. Their situation and their necessities will create their habits and their aptitudes. They will endure, protest, struggle, resist together and unanimously; strive to-day, to-morrow, daily, not to be slain or plundered, to restore their old laws, to obtain or extort guarantees; and they will gradually acquire patience, judgment, all the faculties and inclinations by which liberties are maintained and states are founded. By a singular good fortune, the Norman lords assist them in this; for the king has secured to himself so much, and is found so formidable, that, in order to repress the great pillager, the lesser ones are forced to make use of their Saxon subjects, to ally themselves with them, to give them a share in their charters, to become their representatives, to admit them into Parliament, to leave them to labour freely, to grow rich, to acquire pride, force authority, to interfere with themselves in public affairs. Thus, then, gradually the English nation, buried by the Conquest under ground, as if with a sledge-hammer, extricates and raises itself; five hundred years and more being occupied in this re-elevation. But, during all this time, leisure failed for fine and lofty culture: it was needful to live and defend themselves, to dig the ground, spin wool, bend the bow, attend meetings, juries, to

contribute and argue for common interests: the important and respected man is he who knows well how to fight and get much gain. It was the energetic and warlike manners which were developed, the active and positive spirit which predominated; they left learning and elegance to the Gallicised nobles of the court. When the valiant Saxon townsfolk quitted bow and plough, it was to feast copiously, or to sing the ballad of 'Robin Hood.' They lived and acted; they did not reflect or write; their national literature was reduced to fragments and rudiments, harpers' songs, tavern epics, a religious poem, a few books on religious reformation. At the same time Norman literature faded; separated from the stem, and on a foreign soil, it languished in imitations; only one great poet, almost French in mind, quite French in style, appeared, and, after him, as before him, spread an incurable drivel of words. For the second time, a civilisation of five centuries was found sterile of great ideas and works; this still more so than its neighbours, and for a twofold reason,—because to the universal impotence of the Middle-age was added the impoverishment of the Conquest, and because of the two component literatures, one, transplanted, became abortive, and the other, mutilated, ceased to expand.

II.

But amongst so many rough draughts and attempts, a character was formed, and the rest was to spring from it. The barbarous age had established on the soil a German race, phlegmatic and grave, capable of spiritual emotions and moral discipline. The feudal age had imposed on this race habits of resistance and association, political and utilitarian prejudices. Fancy a German from Hamburg or Bremen confined for five hundred years in the iron corslet of William the Conqueror: these two natures, one innate, the other acquired, constitute all the springs of his conduct. So it was in other nations. Like runners drawn up in line at the start of the race, we see at the epoch of the Renaissance the five great peoples of Europe let loose, though we are unable at first to foresee anything of their career. At first sight it seems as if accidents or circumstances will govern their pace, their fall, and their success. It is not so: from them alone their history depends: each will be the artisan of its fortune; chance has no influence over events so vast; and it is national inclinations and faculties which, overturning or raising obstacles, will lead them, according to their fate, each one to its goal,—some to the extreme of decadence, others to the height of prosperity. After all, man is ever his own master and his own slave. At the outset of every age he in a certain fashion *is:* his body, heart, mind have a distinct structure and disposition; and from this enduring arrangement, which all preceding centuries have contributed to consolidate or to construct, spring permanent desires or aptitudes, by which he determines and acts. Thus is formed in him the ideal model, which, obscure or dis-

tinct, complete or rough-hewn, will thenceforth float before his eyes, rally all his aspirations, efforts, forces, and will occupy him for centuries in one aim, until at length, renewed by impotence or success, he conceives a new end, and assumes a new energy. The Catholic and exalted Spaniard figures life like the Crusaders, lovers, knights, and, abandoning labour, liberty, and science, casts himself, at the head of his inquisition and his king, into fanatical war, romanesque slothfulness, superstitious and impassioned obedience, voluntary and irresistible ignorance.[1] The theological and feudal German settles in his district docilely and faithfully under his petty chiefs, through natural patience and hereditary loyalty, engrossed by his wife and household, content to have conquered religious liberty, clogged by the dulness of his temperament in gross physical existence, and in sluggish respect for established order. The Italian, the most richly gifted and precocious of all, but, of all, the most incapable of voluntary discipline and moral austerity, turns towards the fine arts and voluptuousness, declines, deteriorates beneath foreign dominion, takes life at its easiest, forgetting to think, and satisfied to enjoy. The sociable and levelling Frenchman rallies round his king, who secures for him public peace, external glory, the splendid display of a sumptuous court, a regular administration, a uniform discipline, European predominance, and universal literature. So, if you regard the Englishman in the sixteenth century, you will find in him the inclinations and the powers which for three centuries are to govern his culture and shape his constitution. In this European expansion of natural existence and pagan literature we find at first in Shakspeare, Jonson, and the tragic poets, in Spenser, Sidney, and the lyric poets, the national features, all with incomparable depth and splendour, and such as race and history have impressed and implanted on them for a thousand years. Not in vain did invasion settle here so serious a race, capable of reflection. Not in vain the Conquest turned this race toward warlike life and practical preoccupations. From the first rise of original invention, its work displays the tragic energy, the intense and shapeless passion, the disdain of regularity, the knowledge of the real, the sentiment of inner things, the natural melancholy, the anxious divination of the obscure beyond,—all the instincts which, forcing man upon himself, and concentrating him within himself, prepare him for Protestantism and combat. What is this Protestantism which is being founded? What is this ideal model which it presents; and what original conception is to furnish to this people its permanent and dominant poem? The harshest and most

[1] See the *Travels of Madame d'Aulnay in Spain*, at the end of the seventeenth century. Nothing is more striking than this revolution, if we compare it with the times before Ferdinand the Catholic, namely, the reign of Henry IV., the great power of the nobles, and the independence of the towns. See about all this history, Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, 1867, 3 vols., ii. ch. viii.

practical of all,—that of the Puritans, which, neglecting speculation, falls back upon action, binds human life in a rigid discipline, imposes on the soul continuous effort, prescribes to society a cloistral austerity, forbids pleasure, commands action, exacts sacrifice, and forms the moralist, the labourer, the citizen. Thus is it implanted, the great English idea—I mean the conviction that man is before all a free and moral personage, and that, having conceived alone in his conscience and before God the rule of his conduct, he must employ himself completely in applying it within himself, beyond himself, obstinately, inflexibly, by a perpetual resistance opposed to others, and a perpetual restraint imposed upon himself. In vain will it at first discredit itself by its transports and its tyranny; attenuated by the trial, it will gradually accommodate itself to humanity, and, carried from Puritan fanaticism to laic morality, it will win all public sympathy, because it answers to all the national instincts. In vain it will vanish from high society, under the scorn of the Restoration, and the importation of French culture; it subsists underground. For French culture did not come to a head: on this too alien soil it produced only sickly, coarse, or imperfect fruit. Fine elegance became low debauchery; moderate doubt became brutal atheism; tragedy failed, and was but declamation; comedy grew shameless, and was but a school of vice; of this literature, there endured only the studies of close reasoning and good style; it was driven from the public stage, together with the Stuarts, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and liberal and moral maxims resumed the ascendency, which they will not again lose. For, with ideas, events have followed their course: national inclinations have done their work in society as in literature; and the English instincts have transformed the constitution and politics at the same time as the talents and minds. These rich tithings, these valiant yeomen, these rude, well-armed citizens, well nourished, protected by their juries, wont to reckon on themselves, obstinate, combative, sensible, such as the English Middle-age bequeathed them to modern England, were able to suffer the king to display above them his temporary tyranny, and weigh down the nobility with the rigour of a despot, which the recollection of the Civil War and the danger of high treason justified. But Henry VIII., and Elizabeth herself, must follow in great interests the current of public opinion: if they were strong, it was because they were popular; the people only supported their designs, and authorised their violences, because they found in them defenders of their religion, and protectors of their labour.[1] The people themselves immersed themselves in this religion, and, beyond the legal establishment, attained to personal belief. They grew rich by toil, and under the first Stuart already occupied the highest place in the nation. At this moment all was decided: be events what they might, they must

[1] Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, i. ch. vii.

one day become master. Social situations create political situations; legal constitutions always accommodate themselves to real things; and acquired preponderance infallibly results in written rights. Men so numerous, so active, so resolute, so capable of sufficing for themselves, so disposed to draw their opinions from their own reflection, and their subsistence from their own efforts, will end at all hazards in seizing the guarantees which they need. At the first onset, and in the heat of primitive faith, they overturn the throne, and the current which bears them is so strong, that, in spite of their excess and their failure, the Revolution is accomplished by the abolition of feudal tenures, and the institution of *Habeas Corpus*, under Charles II.; by the universal restoration of the liberal and Protestant spirit, under James II.; by the establishment of the constitution, the act of toleration, the liberation of the press, under William III. From that moment England had found her proper place; her two interior and hereditary forces—moral and religious instinct, practical and political aptitude—had done their work, and were thenceforth to build, without impediment or destruction, on the foundation which they had laid.

III.

Thus was the literature of the eighteenth century born, altogether conservative, useful, moral, and limited. Two powers direct it, one European, the other English: on one side the talent of oratorical analysis and the habits of literary dignity, which are proper to the classical age; on the other, the relish of application and energy of precise observation, which are proper to the national mind. Hence that excellence and originality of political satire, parliamentary discourse, solid energy, moral novels, and all the kinds of literature which demand an attentive good sense, a correct good style, and a talent for advising, convincing, or wounding others. Hence that weakness or impotence of speculative thought, of genuine poetry, of original drama, and of all the kinds which require a wide, free curiosity, or a wide, disinterested imagination. The English did not attain complete elegance, nor superior philosophy; they dulled the French refinements which they copied, and were terrified by the French boldness which they suggested; they remained half cockneys and half barbarians; they only invented insular ideas and English ameliorations, and were confirmed in their respect for their constitution and their tradition. But, at the same time, they were cultivated and reformed: their wealth and comfort increased enormously; literature and opinion became with them severe even to intolerance; and their long war against the French Revolution pushed to excess the rigour of their morality, at the same time as the invention of machinery developed a hundredfold their comfort and prosperity. A salutary and despotic code of approved maxims, established proprieties, and unassailable beliefs, which fortified,

strengthens, curbs, and employs man usefully and painfully, without permitting him even to deviate or grow weak; a minute apparatus, and an admirable provision of commodious inventions, associations, institutions, mechanisms, implements, methods, which incessantly co-operate to furnish body and mind with all which they need,—such are thenceforth the leading and special features of this people. To constrain themselves and to provide for themselves, to assume self-command and command of nature, to consider life as moralists and economists, like a close garment, in which people must walk becomingly, and like a good garment, the best to be had, to be at once respectable and comfortable: these two words embrace all the springs of human actions. Against this limited good sense, and this pedantic austerity, a revolt breaks out. With the universal renewal of thought and imagination, the deep poetic source, which had flowed in the sixteenth century, expands anew in the nineteenth, and a new literature springs to light; philosophy and history infiltrate their doctrines in the old establishment; the greatest poet of the time shocks it incessantly with his curses and sarcasms; from all sides, to this day, in science and letters, in practice and theory, in private and in public life, the most powerful minds endeavour to open a new door to the stream of continental ideas. But they are patriots as well as innovators, conservative as well as revolutionary; if they touch religion and constitution, manners and doctrines, it is to widen, not to destroy them: England is made; she knows it, and they know it. Such as this country is, based on the whole national history and on the whole national instincts, it is more capable than any other people in Europe of transforming itself without recasting, and of devoting itself to its future without renouncing its past.

§ 2.

I.

I began to perceive these ideas when I first landed in England, and I was singularly struck with the mutual confirmations afforded by observation and history; it seemed to me that the present was completing the past, and the past explained the present.

At first the sea troubles and strikes a man with wonder; not in vain is a people insular and oceanic, especially with this sea and these coasts; their painters, so ill endowed, perceive, in spite of all, its alarming and gloomy aspect; up to the eighteenth century, amidst the elegance of French culture, and under the joviality of Flemish tradition, you will find in Gainsborough the ineffaceable stamp of this great sentiment. In pleasant moments, in the fine calm summer days, the moist fog stretches over the horizon its greyish veil; the sea has the colour of a pale slate; and the ships, spreading their canvas, ad-

vance patiently through the mist. But look around you, and you will soon see the signs of daily peril. The coast is eaten out, the waves have encroached, the trees have vanished, the earth is softened by incessant showers, the ocean is here, ever intractable and fierce. It growls and bellows eternally, that old hoarse monster; and the barking pack of its waves advance like an endless army, before which all human force must give way. Think of the winter months, the storms, the long hours of the tempest-tossed sailor, whirled about blindly by the squalls! Now, and in this fine season, over the whole circle of the horizon, rise the gloomy, wan, clouds, like the smoke of a coal-fire, some of a frail and dazzling white, so swollen that they seem ready to burst. Their heavy masses creep slowly along; they are gorged, and already here and there on the limitless plain a patch of sky is shrouded in a sudden shower. After an instant, the sea becomes dirty and cadaverous; its waves leap with strange gambollings, and their sides take an oily and livid tint. The vast grey dome has drowned and hidden the whole horizon; the rain falls, close and pitiless. You cannot have an idea of it, until you have seen it. When the southern men, the Romans, came here for the first time, they must have thought themselves in hell. The wide space stretching between earth and sky, and on which our eyes dwell as their domain, suddenly fails; there is no more air, we see but a flowing mist. No more colours or forms. In this yellowish smoke, objects look like fading ghosts; nature seems a bad crayon-drawing, over which a child has awkwardly smeared his sleeve. Here you are at Newhaven, then at London; the sky disgorges rain, the earth returns her mist, the mist floats in the rain; all is swamped: looking round you, you see no reason why it should ever end. Here, truly, is Homer's Cimmerian land: your feet splash, you have no use left for your eyes; you feel all your organs stopped up, rusted by the mounting damp; you think yourself banished from the breathing world, reduced to the condition of marshy beings dwelling in dirty pools: to live here is not life. You ask yourself if this vast town is not a cemetery, in which dabble busy and wretched ghosts. Amidst the deluge of moist soot, the muddy stream with its unwearying iron ships, black insects which take and land shades, makes you think of the Styx. There being no more daylight, they create it. Lately, in a large square in London, in the finest hotel, for five days at a time, it was necessary to leave the gas alight. Melancholy besets you; you are disgusted with others and with yourself. What can they do in this sepulchre? To remain here without working is to gnaw one's vitals, and end in suicide. To go out is to make an effort, to be above damp and cold, to brave discomfort and unpleasant sensations. Such a climate prescribes action, forbids sloth, develops energy, teaches patience. I was looking just now at the sailors at the helm,—their tarpaulins, their great streaming boots, their sou'-westers, so attentive, so precise in their movements, so grave, so self-contained. I have since

seen workmen at their cotton looms,—calm, grave, silent, economising their effort, and persevering all day, all the year, all their life, in the same regular and monotonous struggle of body and mind: their soul is suited to their climate. In fact, it must be so in order to live: after a week, we feel that here a man must renounce refined and heartfelt enjoyment, the happiness of careless life, the easy and harmonious expansion of artistic and animal nature; that here he must marry, bring up a house-full of children, assume the cares and importance of a family man, grow rich, provide against the evil day, surround himself with comfort, become a Protestant, a manufacturer, a politician; in short, capable of activity and resistance; and in all the ways open to men, endure and strive.

Yet here there are charming and always touching beauties—those, to wit, of a well-watered land. When, on a partly clear day, we take a drive into the country and reach an eminence, our eyes experience a unique sensation, and a pleasure hitherto unknown. In the far distance, at the four corners of the horizon, in the fields, on the hills, spreads the cool verdure, plants for fodder and food, clover, hops; lovely meadows overflowing with high thick grass; here and there a grove of lofty trees; pasture lands hemmed in with hedges, in which the heavy cows feed on their knees in peace. The mist rises insensibly between the trees, and the prospect swims in a luminous vapour. There is nothing sweeter in the world, nor more delicate, than these tints; we might pause for hours together gazing on these pearly clouds, this fine aerial down, this soft transparent gauze which imprisons the rays of the sun, dulls them, and lets them reach the ground only to smile on it and caress it. On both sides of our carriage pass incessantly meadows each more lovely than the last, in which buttercups, meadow-sweet, Easter-daisies, are crowded in succession with their dissolving hues; a sweetness almost painful, a strange charm, breathes from this inexhaustible and transient vegetation. It is too fresh, it cannot last; nothing here is staid, stable, and firm, as in the South; all is fleeting, in the stage of birth or death, hovering betwixt tears and joy. The rolling water-drops shine on the leaves like pearls; the round tree-tops, the widespread foliage whispers in the feeble breeze, and the sound of the falling tears left by the last shower never ceases. How well these plants thrive in the glades, spread out wantonly, ever renewed and watered by the moist air! How the sap mounts in these plants, refreshed and sheltered against the rays of the sun! And how sky and land seem made to cherish their tissue and refresh their hues! At the least glimpse of sun they smile with delicious charm; you would call them frail and timid virgins under a veil about to be raised. Let the sun for an instant emerge, and you will see them grow resplendent as in a ball dress. The light falls in dazzling sheets; the lustrous golden petals shine with a too vivid colour; the most splendid embroideries, velvet starred with diamonds, sparkling silk seamed with pearls, are not to be compared to this deep hue; joy overflows

like a brimming cup. In the strangeness, the rarity of this spectacle, we understand for the first time the life of a humid land. The water multiplies and softens the living tissues; plants increase, and have no substance; nourishment abounds, and has no savour; moisture fructifies, but the sun does not fertilise. Much grass, much cattle, much meat; large quantities of coarse food: thus an absorbing and phlegmatic temperament is supported; the human growth, like the animal and vegetable, is powerful, but heavy; man is amply but coarsely framed; the machine is solid, but it rolls slowly on its hinges, and the hinges generally creak and are rusty. When we look at the people nearer, it seems that their various parts are independent, at least that they need time to let sensations pass through them. Their ideas do not at first break out in passions, gestures, actions. As in the Fleming and the German, they dwell first of all in the brain; they expand there, they rest there; man is not shaken by them, he has no trouble in standing still, he is not rapt: he can act wisely, uniformly; for his inner motive power is an idea or a watchword, not an emotion or an attraction. He can bear tedium, or rather he does not weary himself; his ordinary course consists of dull sensations, and the insipid monotony of mechanical life has nothing which need repel him. He is made for it, his nature is suited for it. When a man has all his life eaten turnips, he does not wish for oranges. He will readily resign himself to hear fifteen discourses running on the same subject, demanding twenty consecutive years the same reform, examining statistics, studying moral treatises, keeping Sunday schools, bringing up a dozen children. The piquant, the agreeable, are not a necessity to him. The weakness of his sensitive impulses contributes to the force of his moral impulses. His temperament makes him argumentative; he can get on without policemen; the shocks of man against man do not here end in explosions. He can discuss in the market-place, aloud, religion and politics, hold meetings, form associations, rudely attack men in office, say that the Constitution is violated, predict the ruin of the State: there is no objection to this; his nerves are calm; he will argue without cutting throats; he will not raise revolutions; and perhaps he will obtain a reform. Observe the passers-by in the streets: in three hours you will see all the sensible features of this temperament; light hair, in children almost white; pale eyes, often blue as Wedgwood-ware, red whiskers, a tall figure, the motions of an automaton; and with these other still more striking features, those which strong food and combative life have added to this temperament. Here the enormous guardsman, with rosy complexion, majestic, erect, who twirls a little cane in his hand, displaying his chest, and showing a clear parting between his pomaded hair; there the over-fed stout man, short, sanguine, like an animal fit for the shambles, with his alarmed, astounded, yet sluggish air; a little further the country gentleman, six feet high, stout and tall, like the German who left his forest, with the muzzle and nose of a bull-dog,

disproportionate and straggling whiskers, rolling eyes, apoplectic face: these are the excesses of coarse blood and food; add to which, even in the women, the white front of carnivorous teeth, and the great feet, solidly shod, excellent for walking in the mud. Again, look at the young men in a cricket match or picnic party; doubtless mind does not sparkle in their eyes, but life abounds there: there is something of decision and energy in their whole being; healthy and active, ready for motion, for enterprise, these are the words which rise involuntarily to the lips when we speak of them. Many have the air of fine, slender harriers, sniffing the air, and in full cry. A life passed in the gymnasium or in venturesome deeds is honoured in England; they must move their body, swim, throw the ball, run in the damp meadow, row, breathe in their boats the briny sea vapour, feel on their foreheads the raindrops falling from the oak trees, leap their horses over ditches and gates; the animal instincts are intact. They still relish natural pleasures; precocity has not spoiled them. Nothing can be simpler than the young English girls; amidst many beautiful things, there are few so beautiful girls in the world; slim, strong, self-assured, so fundamentally honest and loyal, so free from coquetry! A man cannot imagine, if he has not seen it, this freshness and innocence; many of them are flowers, expanded flowers; only a morning rose, with its transient and delicious colour, with its petals drenched in dew, can give us an idea of it; it leaves far behind the beauty of the South, and its precise, stable, finished contours, its definitive outlines; here we perceive fragility, delicacy, the continual budding of life; candid eyes, blue as periwinkles, looking at you without thinking of your look. At the least motion of the soul, the blood rushes to these girls' cheeks, necks, shoulders, in waves of purple; you see emotions pass over these transparent complexions, as the colours change in the meadows; and their modesty is so virginal and sincere, that you are tempted to lower your eyes from respect. And yet, natural and frank as they are, they are not languishing or dreamy; they love and endure exercise like their brothers; with flowing locks, at six years they ride on horseback and take long walks. Active life in this country strengthens the phlegmatic temperament, and the heart is kept more simple whilst the body grows healthier. Another observation: far above all these figures one type stands out, the most truly English, the most striking to a foreigner. Post yourself for an hour, early in the morning, at the terminus of a railway, and observe the men above thirty who come to London on business: the features are drawn, the faces pale, the eyes fixed, preoccupied; the mouth open and, as it were, contracted; the man is tired, worn out, and hardened by too much work; he runs without looking round him. His whole existence is directed to a single end; he must incessantly exert himself to the utmost, practise the same exertion, a profitable one; he has become a machine. This is especially visible in workmen; perseverance, obstinacy, resignation, are depicted on their long bony and

dull faces. It is still more visible in women of the lower orders: many are thin, consumptive, their eyes hollow, their nose sharp, their skin streaked with red patches; they have suffered too much, have had too many children, have a worked-out, or oppressed, or submissive, or stoically impassive air; we feel that they have endured much, and can endure still more. Even in the middle or upper class this patience and sad hardening are frequent; we think when we see them of those poor beasts of burden, deformed by the harness, which remain motionless under the rain without thinking of shelter. Verily the battle of life is harsher and more obstinate here than elsewhere; whoever gives way, falls. Beneath the rigour of climate and competition, amidst the strikes of industry, the weak, the improvident perish or are degraded; then comes gin and does its work; thence the long files of wretched women who sell themselves by night in the Strand to pay their rent; thence those shameful quarters of London, Liverpool, all the great towns, those half-naked spectres, gloomy or drunk, who crowd the dram-shops, who fill the streets with their dirty linen, and their tatters hung out on ropes, who lie on a soot-heap, amidst troops of wan children; horrible shoals, whither descend all whom their wounded, idle, or feeble arms could not keep on the surface of the great stream. The chances of life are tragic here, and the punishment of improvidence cruel. We soon understand why, under this obligation to fight and grow hard, fine sensations disappear; why taste is blunted, how man becomes ungraceful and stiff; how discords, exaggerations, mar the costume and the fashion; why movements and forms end by being energetic and discordant, like the motions of a machine. If the man is German by race, temperament, and mind, he has been compelled in process of time to fortify, alter, altogether turn aside his original nature; he is no longer a primitive animal, but a well-trained animal; his body and mind have been transformed by strong nourishment, by corporal exercise, by austere religion, by public morality, by political strife, by perpetuity of effort; he has become of all men the most capable of acting usefully and powerfully in all directions, the most productive and effectual labourer, as his ox has become the best animal for food, his sheep the best for wool, his horse the best for racing

II.

In fact, there is no greater spectacle than his work; in no age or nation of the earth, I believe, has matter ever been better handled and utilised. Enter London by water, and you will see an accumulation of toil and work which has no equal on this planet. Paris, by comparison, is but an elegant city of pleasure; the Seine, with its quays, a pretty serviceable plaything. Here all is vast. I have seen Marseilles, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, but I had no idea of such a mass. From Greenwich to London the two shores are a continuous wharf: merchandise is always being piled up, sacks hoisted, ships

moored; ever new warehouses for copper, beer, ropework, tar, chemicals. Docks, timber-yards, calking-basins, and dockyards multiply and encroach on each other. On the left there is the iron framework of a church being finished, to be sent to India. The Thames is a mile broad, and is but a populous street of vessels, a winding work-yard. Steamboats, sailing vessels, ascend and descend, come to anchor in groups of two, three, ten, then in long files, then in dense rows; there are five or six thousand of them at anchor. On the right, the docks, like so many intricate, maritime streets, disgorge or store up the vessels. If you get on a height, you see vessels in the distance by hundreds and thousands, fixed as if on the land; their masts in a line, their slender rigging, make a spider-web which girdles the horizon. Yet on the river itself, to the west, we see an inextricable forest of masts, yards, and cables; the ships are unloading, fastened to one another, mingled with chimneys, amongst the pulleys of the storehouses, cranes, capstans, and all the implements of the vast and ceaseless toil. A foggy smoke, penetrated by the sun, wraps them in its russet veil; it is the heavy and smoky air of a great hot-house; soil and man, light and air, all is transformed by work. If you enter one of these docks, the impression will be yet more overwhelming: each resembles a town; always ships, still more ships, in a line, showing their heads; their hollowed sides, their copper chests, like monstrous fishes under their breastplate of scales. When we descend below, we see that this breastplate is fifty feet high; many are of three thousand or four thousand tons. Long clippers of three hundred feet are on the point of sailing for Australia, Ceylon, America. A bridge is raised by machinery; it weighs a hundred tons, and only one man is needed to raise it. Here are the wine stores—there are thirty thousand tuns of port in the cellars; here the place for hides, here for tallow, here for ice. The universe tends to this centre. Like a heart, to which the blood flows, and from which it pours, money, goods, business arrive hither from the four quarters of the globe, and flow thence to all the quarters of the world. And this circulation seems natural, so well is it conducted. The cranes turn noiselessly; the tuns seem to move of themselves; a little car rolls them at once, and without effort; the bales descend by their own weight on the inclined planes, which lead them to their place. Clerks, without flurry, call out the numbers; men push or pull without confusion, calmly husbanding their labour; whilst the cool master, in his black hat, gravely, with spare gestures, and without one word, directs.

Now take rail and go to Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, to see their industry. As you advance into the coal country, the air is darkened with smoke; the chimneys, high as obelisks, are crowded by hundreds, and cover the plain as far as you can see; multiplied diagonal lines, lofty buildings, in red monotonous brick, pass before the eyes, like rows of economical and busy beehives. The blast-furnaces flame through the smoke; I counted sixteen in one group.

The refuse of minerals is heaped up like mountains; the engines run like black ants, with monotonous and violent motion, and suddenly we find ourselves swallowed up in a monstrous town. This manufactory has five thousand hands, one mill 300,000 spindles. The Manchester warehouses are Babylonian edifices, a hundred and twenty yards wide and long, in six storeys. In Liverpool there are 5000 ships along the Mersey, which choke one another up; more wait to enter. The docks are six miles long, and the cotton warehouses on the border extend their vast red rampart out of sight. All things here seem built in unmeasured proportions, and as though by colossal arms. You enter a mill; nothing but iron pillars, thick as tree-trunks, cylinders as broad as a man; locomotive shafts like vast oaks, notching machines which send up iron chips, rollers which bend sheet-iron like paste, fly-wheels which become invisible by the swiftness of their revolution. Eight workmen, commanded by a kind of peaceful colossus, pushed into and pulled from the fire a tree of red iron as big as my body. Coal has produced all this growth. England has twice as much coal as the remainder of the world. Add brick, the great schists, which are close to the surface, and the estuaries filled by the sea, so as to make natural ports. Liverpool and Manchester, and about ten towns of 40,000 to 100,000 souls, are springing up like plants in the basin of Lancashire. Glance over the map, and you see the districts shaded with black—Glasgow, Newcastle, Birmingham, Wales, all Ireland, which is one block of coal. The old antediluvian forests, accumulating here their fuel, have stored up the power which moves matter, and the sea furnishes the true road by which matter can be transported. Man himself, mind and body, seems made to profit by these advantages. His muscles are resistive, and his mind can support tedium. He is less subject to weariness and disgust than other men. He works as well in the tenth hour as in the first. No one handles machines better; he has their regularity and precision. Two workmen in a cotton-mill do the work of three, or even four, French workmen. Look now in the statistics how many leagues of stuffs they fabricate every year, how many millions of tons they export and import, how many tens of millions they produce and consume; add the industrial or commercial states they have founded, or are founding, in America, China, India, Australia; and then, perhaps, reckoning men and value,—considering that their capital is seven or eight times greater than that of France, that their population has doubled in fifty years, that their colonies, wherever the climate is healthy, are becoming new Englands,—you will obtain some notion, very slight, very imperfect, of a work whose magnitude the eyes alone can measure.

There remains yet one of its parts to explore—cultivation. From the railway carriage we see quite enough to understand it: a field with a hedge, then another field with another hedge, and so on; at times vast squares of radishes, all in line, clean, glossy; no forests, here and there only a grove. The country is a great kitchen-garden

—a manufactory of grass and meat. Nothing is left to nature and chance; all is calculated, regulated, arranged to produce and to bring in profits. If you look at the peasants, you find no more genuine peasants; nothing like French peasants,—a sort of fellahs, akin to the soil, mistrustful and uncultivated, separated by a gulf from the citizens. The countryman here is like an artisan; and, in fact, a field is a manufactory, with a farmer for a foreman. Proprietors and farmers, they lavish capital like great contractors. They have drained; they have a rotation of crops; they have produced a cattle, the richest in returns of any in the world; they have introduced steam-engines into cultivation, and into the breeding of cattle; they perfect already perfect stables. The greatest of the aristocracy take a pride in it; many country gentlemen have no other occupation. Prince Albert, near Windsor, had a model farm, and this farm brought in money. A few years ago the papers announced that the Queen had discovered a cure for the turkey-disease. Under this universal effort,[1] the products of agriculture have doubled in fifty years. The English acre receives eight or ten times more manure than the French hectare; though of inferior quality, they have made it produce double. Thirty persons are enough for this work, when in France forty would be required for half thereof. You come upon a farm, even a small one, say of a hundred acres; you find respectable, worthy, well-clad men, who express themselves clearly and sensibly; a large, wholesome, comfortable dwelling—often a little porch, with climbing plants—a well-kept garden, ornamental trees, the inner walls whitewashed yearly, the floors washed weekly—an almost Dutch cleanness; therewith plenty of books—travels, treatises on agriculture, a few volumes of religion or history; first of all, the great family Bible. Even in the poorest cottages we find a few objects of comfort and recreation: a large cast-iron stove, a carpet, nearly always a paper on the walls, one or two moral novels, and always the Bible. The cottage is clean; the habits are orderly; the plates, with their blue pattern, regularly arranged, look well above the shining dresser; the red floor-tiles have been swept; there are no broken or dirty panes; no doors off hinges, shutters unhung, stagnant pools, straggling dunghills, as amongst the French villagers; the little garden is kept free from weeds; frequently roses and honeysuckle round the door; and on Sunday we can see the father, the mother, seated by a well-scrubbed table, with tea and butter, enjoy their *home*, and the order they have established there. In France the peasant on Sunday leaves his hut to visit his *land:* what he aspires to is possession; what Englishmen love is comfort. There is no land in which they demand more in this respect. An Englishman said to me, not very long ago: 'Our great vice is the strong desire we feel for all good and comfortable things. We have too many wants. As soon

[1] Léonce de Lavergne, *Economie rurale en Angleterre, passim*

as our peasants have a little money, they buy the best sherry and the best clothes, instead of buying a bit of land.'[1]

As we rise to the upper classes, this taste becomes stronger. In the middle ranks a man burdens himself with toil, to give his wife gaudy dresses, and to fill his house with the hundred thousand baubles of quasi-luxury. Higher still, the inventions of comfort are so multiplied that people are bored by them; there are too many newspapers and reviews on your bed-table at night; too many kinds of carpets, washstands, matches, towels in your dressing-room; their refinement is endless; you would think, thrusting your feet in slippers, that twenty generations of inventors were required to bring sole and lining to this degree of perfection. You cannot conceive clubs better furnished with necessaries and superfluities, houses so well provided and managed, pleasure and abundance so cunningly understood, servants so reliable, respectful, speedy. Servants in the last census were 'the most numerous class of Her Majesty's subjects;' in England there are five where in France they have two. When I saw in Hyde Park the rich young ladies, the gentlemen riding and driving, when I reflected on their country houses, their dress, their parks and stables, I said to myself that verily this people is constituted after the heart of economists: I mean, that it is the greatest producer and the greatest consumer in the world; that none is more apt at squeezing out and absorbing the quintessence of things; that it has developed its wants at the same time as its resources; and you involuntarily think of those insects which, after their metamorphosis, are suddenly provided with teeth, feelers, unwearying claws, admirable and terrible instruments, fitted to dig, saw, build, do everything, but furnished also with incessant hunger and four stomachs.

III.

How is the ant-hill governed? As the train advances, you perceive, amidst farms and cultivation, the long wall of a park, the façade of a castle, more generally of some vast ornate mansion, a sort of country town-house, of inferior architecture, Gothic or Italian pretensions, but surrounded by beautiful lawns, large trees scrupulously preserved. Here live the rich *bourgeois;* I am wrong, the word is false—I must say *gentlemen: bourgeois* is a French word, and signifies the lazy rich, who devote themselves to rest, and take no part in public life; here it is quite different; the hundred or hundred and twenty thousand families, who spend thousands and more annually, really govern the country. And this is no government imported, implanted artificially and from

[1] De Foe was of the same opinion, and pretended that economy was not an English virtue, and that an Englishman can hardly live with twenty shillings a week, while a Dutchman with the same money becomes wealthy, and leaves his children very well off. An English labourer lives poor and wretchedly with nine shillings a week, whilst a Dutchman lives very comfortably with the same salary.

without; it is a spontaneous and natural government. As soon as men wish to act together, they need leaders; every association, voluntary or not, has one; whatever it be, state, army, ship, or commonalty, it cannot do without a guide to find the road, enter it, call the rest, scold the laggards. In vain we call ourselves independent; as soon as we march in a body, we need a leader; we look right and left expecting him to show himself. The great thing is to pick him out, to have the best, and not to follow another in his stead; it is a great advantage that there should be one, and that we should acknowledge him. These men, without popular election, or selection from above, find him ready made and recognised in the influential landholder, an old county man, powerful through his connections, dependants, tenantry, interested above all else by his great possessions in the affairs of the neighbourhood, expert in the concerns which his family have managed for three generations, most fitted by education to give good advice, and by his influence to lead the common enterprise to a good result. In fact, it is thus that things falls out; rich men leave London by hundreds every day to spend a day in the country; there is a meeting on the affairs of the county or of the church; they are magistrates, overseers, presidents of all kinds of societies, and this gratuitously. One has built a bridge at his own expense, another a church or a school; many establish public libraries, with warmed and lighted rooms, in which the villagers in the evening find the papers, games, tea, at low charges,—in a word, simple amusements which may keep them from the gin-shop. Many of them give lectures; their sisters or daughters teach in Sunday schools; in fact, they give to the ignorant and poor, at their own expense, justice, administration, civilisation. I have seen one, having an enormous fortune, who on Sunday in his school taught singing to little girls. Lord Palmerston offered his park for archery meetings; the Duke of Marlborough opens his daily to the public, 'requesting (this is the word used) the public not to destroy the grass.' A firm and proud sentiment of duty, a genuine public spirit, a liberal notion of what a gentleman owes to himself, gives them a moral superiority which sanctions their command; probably from the time of the old Greek cities, no education or condition has been seen in which the innate nobility of man has received a more wholesome or completer development. In short, they are magistrates and patrons from their birth, leaders of the great enterprises in which capital is risked, promoters of all charities, all improvements, all reforms, and with the honours of command they accept its burdens. For observe, in contrast with other aristocracies, they are well educated, liberal, and march in the van, not at the tail of public civilisation. They are not drawing-room exquisites, as our marquises of the eighteenth century: a lord visits his fisheries, studies the system of liquid manures, speaks to the purpose about cheese; and his son is often a better rower, walker, and boxer than the farmers. They are not malcontents, like the French

nobility, behind their age, devoted to whist, and regretting the middle-ages. They have travelled through Europe, and often farther; they know languages and literature; their daughters read Schiller, Manzoni, and Lamartine with ease. By means of reviews, newspapers, innumerable volumes of geography, statistics, and travels, they have the world at their finger-ends. They support and preside over scientific societies; if the free inquirers of Oxford, amidst conventional rigour, have been able to give their explanations of the Bible, it is because they knew themselves to be backed by enlightened laymen of the highest rank. There is also no danger that this aristocracy of talent should become a set; it renews itself; a great physician, a profound lawyer, an illustrious general, become ennobled and found families. When a manufacturer or merchant has gained a large fortune, he first thinks of acquiring an estate; after two or three generations his family has taken root, and shares in the government of the country: in this way the best saplings of the great popular forest come to recruit the aristocratic nursery. Mark, in the last place, that the institution is not isolated. Throughout there are leaders recognised, respected, followed with confidence and deference, who feel their responsibility, and carry the burden as well as the advantages of the dignity. There is such an institution in marriage, by which the man incontestably rules, followed by his wife to the end of the world, faithfully waited for in the evenings, unshackled in his business, of which he does not speak. There is such in the family, when the father[1] can disinherit his children, and keeps up with them, in the most petty circumstances of daily life, a degree of authority and dignity unknown in France: if in England a son, through ill-health, has been away for some time from his home, he dare not come into the county to see his father without leave; a servant to whom I gave my card refused to take it, saying, 'Oh! I dare not now. Master is dining.' There is respect in all ranks, in the workshops as in the fields, in the army as in the family. Throughout there are inferiors and superiors who feel themselves so; if the mechanism of established power were thrown out of gear, we should behold it reconstructed of itself; below the legal constitution is the social, and human action is forced into a solid mould prepared for it.

It is because this aristocratic network is strong that human action can be free; for local and natural government being rooted throughout, like ivy, by a hundred small, ever-growing fibres, the sudden movements, violent as they are, are not capable of pulling it up altogether. In vain men speak, cry out, call meetings, hold processions, form leagues they will not demolish the state; they have not to deal with a set of functionaries who have no real hold on the country, and who, like all external applications, can be replaced by another set: the thirty or

[1] In familiar language, the father is called in England the governor; in France *le banquier*.

forty gentlemen of a district, rich, influential, trusted, useful as they are, will become the leaders of the district. 'As we see in the papers, says Montesquieu, speaking of England, 'that they are playing the devil, we fancy that the people will revolt to-morrow.' Not at all, it is their way of speaking; they only talk loudly and rudely. Two days after I arrived in London, I saw advertising men walking with a placard on their backs and their stomachs, bearing these words: 'Great usurpation! Outrage of the Lords, in their vote on the budget, against the rights of the people.' But then the placard added, 'Fellow-countrymen, petition!' Things end thus; they argue in free terms, and if the reasoning is good it will spread. Another time in Hyde Park, orators were declaiming in the open air against the Lords, who were called rogues. The audience applauded or hissed, as it pleased them. 'After all,' said an Englishman to me, 'this is how we manage our business. With us, when a man has an idea, he writes it; a dozen men think it good, and then all contribute money to publish it; this creates a little association, which grows, prints cheap pamphlets, gives lectures, then petitions, calls forth public opinion, and at last takes the matter into Parliament; Parliament refuses or delays it; yet the matter gains weight: the majority of the nation pushes, forces open the doors, and then you'll have a law passed.' It is open to every one to do this; workmen can league against their masters; in fact, their associations embrace all England; at Preston I believe there was once a strike which lasted more than six months. They will sometimes mob, but never revolt; they know political economy by this time, and understand that to do violence to capital is to suppress work. Above all, they are cool; here, as elsewhere, temperament has great influence. Anger, blood does not rise at once to their eyes, as in the southern nations; a long interval always separates idea from action, and wise arguments, repeated calculations, occupy the interval. Go to a meeting, consider men of every condition, the ladies who come for the thirtieth time to hear the same speech, full of figures, on education, cotton, wages. They do not seem to be wearied; they can bring argument against argument, be patient, protest gravely, recommence their protest; they are the same people who wait for the train on the platform, without getting crushed, and who play cricket for a couple of hours without raising their voices or quarrelling for an instant. Two coachmen, who run into one another, set themselves free without storming or scolding. Thus their political association endures; they can be free because they have natural leaders and patient nerves. After all, the state is a machine like other machines; try to have good wheels, and take care you don't break them; Englishmen have the double advantage of possessing very good ones, and of managing them coolly.

IV.

Such is our Englishman, with his provision and his administration

Now that he has provided for private comfort and public security, what will he do, and how will he govern himself in this higher, nobler domain, to which man climbs to contemplate beauty and truth? At all events, the arts do not lead him there. That vast London is monumental; but, like the castle of a man who has become rich, everything there is well preserved and costly, but nothing more. Those lofty houses of massive stone, burdened with porches, short columns, Greek decorations, are generally gloomy; the poor columns of the monuments seem washed with ink. On Sunday, in foggy weather, you would think yourself in a cemetery; the perfect readable names on the houses, in brass letters, are like sepulchral inscriptions. There is nothing beautiful: at most, the varnished middle-class houses, with their patch of green, are pleasant; we feel that they are well kept, commodious, capital for a business man who wants to amuse himself and unbend after a hard day's work. But a finer and higher sentiment could relish nothing there. As to the statues, it is difficult not to laugh at them. You should see the Duke of Wellington, with his cocked hat with iron plumes; Nelson, with a cable which serves him for a tail, planted on his column, and pierced by a lightning-conductor, like a rat impaled on the end of a pole; or again, the half-dressed Waterloo Generals, crowned by Victory. The English, though flesh and bone, seem manufactured out of sheet-iron: how much more so will English statues look? They pride themselves on their painting; at least they study it with surprising minuteness, in the Chinese fashion; they can paint a bottle of hay so exactly, that a botanist will tell the species of every stalk; one artist lived three months under canvas on a heath, so that he might thoroughly know heath. Many are excellent observers, especially of moral expression, and succeed very well in showing you the soul in the face; we are instructed by looking at them; we go through a course of psychology with them; they can illustrate a novel; you would be touched by the poetic and dreamy meaning of many of their landscapes. But in genuine painting, picturesque painting, they are revolting. I do not think there were ever laid upon canvas such crude colours, such stiff forms, stuffs so much like tin, such glaring contrasts. Fancy an opera with nothing but false notes in it. You may see landscapes painted blood-red, trees which split the canvas, turf which looks like a pot of overturned green, Christs looking as if they were baked and preserved in oil, expressive stags, sentimental dogs, undressed women, to whom we should like forthwith to offer a garment. In music, they import the Italian opera; it is an orange tree kept up at great cost in the midst of beetroots. The arts require idle, delicate minds, not stoics, especially not puritans, easily shocked by dissonance, inclined to sensuous pleasure, employing their long periods of leisure, their free reveries, in harmoniously arranging, and with no other object but enjoyment, forms, colours, and sounds. I need not say that here the bent of mind is quite opposite; and we see clearly

enough why, amidst these combative politicians, these laborious toilers, these men of energetic action, art can but produce exotic or ill-shaped fruit.

Not so in science; but in science there are two divisions. It may be treated as a business, to glean and verify observations, to combine experiences, to arrange figures, to weigh probabilities, to discover facts, partial laws, to possess laboratories, libraries, societies charged with storing and increasing positive knowledge; in all this Englishmen excel. They have even Lyells, Darwins, Owens, able to embrace and renew a science; in the construction of the vast edifice, the industrious masons, masters of the second rank, are not lacking; it is the great architects, the thinkers, the genuine speculative minds, who fail them; philosophy, especially metaphysics, is as little indigenous here as music and painting; they import it, and yet they leave the best part on the road. Carlyle was obliged to transform it into a mystical poetry, humorous and prophetic fancies; Hamilton touched upon it only, to declare it chimerical; Stuart Mill, Buckle, only seized the most palpable part,—a heavy residuum, positivism. It is not in metaphysics that the English mind can find its vent. It is on other objects that the spirit of liberal inquiry—the sublime instincts of the mind, the craving for the universal and the infinite, the desire of ideal and perfect things—will fall back. Let us take the day on which the hush of business leaves a free field for disinterested aspirations. There is no more striking spectacle for a foreigner than Sunday in London. The streets are empty, and the churches full. An Act of Parliament forbids any playing to-day, public or private; the public-houses are not allowed to harbour people during divine service. Moreover, all respectable people are at worship, the seats are full: it is not as in France, where there are none but servants, old women, a few sleepy people, of private means, and a sprinkling of elegant ladies; but in England we see men well dressed, or at least decently clad, and as many gentlemen as ladies in church. Religion does not remain out of the pale, and below the standard of public culture; the young, the learned, the best of the nation, all the upper and middle classes, continue attached to it. The clergyman, even in a village, is not a peasant's son with not much polish, fresh from college, shackled in a cloistral education, separated from society by celibacy, half-buried in mediævalism. He is a man of the times, often a man of the world, often of good family, with the interests, habits, liberties of other men; keeping sometimes a carriage, several servants, having elegant manners, generally well informed, who has read and still reads. On all these grounds he is able to be in his neighbourhood the leader of ideas, as his neighbour the squire is the leader of business. If he does not walk in the same path as the free-thinkers, he is not more than a step or two behind them; a modern man, a Parisian, can talk with him on all lofty themes, and not perceive a gulf between his own mind and the clergyman's. Strictly speaking, he is a layman like you; the only

difference is, that he is a superintendent of morality. Even in his externals, except for occasional bands and the perpetual white tie, he is like you: at first sight, you would take him for a professor, a magistrate, or a notary; and his sermons agree with his person. He does not anathematise the world; in this his doctrine is modern; he follows the broad path in which the Renaissance and the Reformation have impelled religion. When Christianity arose, eighteen centuries ago, it was in the East, in the land of the Essenes and Therapeutists, amid universal decay and despair, when the only deliverance seemed a renunciation of the world, an abandonment of civil life, destruction of the natural instincts, and a daily waiting for the kingdom of God. When it rose again, three centuries ago, it was in the West, amongst laborious and half-free peoples, amidst universal restoration and invention, when man, improving his condition, regained confidence in his worldly destiny, and widely expanded his faculties. No wonder if the new Protestantism differs from the ancient Christianity, if it enjoins action instead of preaching asceticism, if it authorises comforts in place of prescribing mortification, if it honours marriage, work, patriotism, inquiry, science, all natural affections and faculties, in place of praising celibacy, retreat, scorn of the age, ecstasy, captivity of mind, and mutilation of the heart. By this infusion of the modern spirit, Christianity has received new blood, and Protestantism now constitutes, with science, the two motive organs, and, as it were, the double heart of European life. For, in accepting the rehabilitation of the world, it has not renounced the purification of man's heart; on the contrary, it is towards this that it has directed its whole effort. It has cut off from religion all the portions which are not this very purification, and, by reducing it, has strengthened it. An institution, like a machine, and like a man, is the more powerful for being more special: a work is done better because it is done singly, and because we concentrate ourselves upon it. By the suppression of legends and religious practices, human thought in its entirety has been concentrated on a single object—moral amelioration. It is of this men speak in the churches, gravely and coldly, with a succession of sensible and solid arguments; how a man ought to reflect on his duties, mark them one by one in his mind, make for himself principles, have a sort of inner code, freely accepted and firmly established, to which he may refer all his actions without bias or hesitation; how these principles may be rooted by practice; how unceasing examination, personal effort, the continual edification of himself by himself, ought slowly to confirm our resolution in uprightness. These are the questions which, with a multitude of examples, proofs, appeals to daily experience,[1] are brought forward in all the pulpits, to develop in man a voluntary reformation, a guard and empire over himself, the habit of self-restraint, and a kind of modern

[1] Let the reader, amongst many others, peruse the sermons of Dr. Arnold, delivered in the School Chapel at Rugby.

stoicism, almost as noble as the ancient. On all hands laymen help in this; and moral warning, given by literature as well as by theology, unites in harmony, society, and the clergy. Hardly ever does a book paint a man in a disinterested manner: critics, philosophers, historians, novelists, poets even, give a lesson, maintain a theory, unmask or punish a vice, represent a temptation overcome, relate the history of a character becoming formed. Their exact and minute description of sentiments ends always in approbation or blame; they are not artists, but moralists: it is only in a Protestant country that you will find a novel entirely occupied in describing the progress of moral sentiment in a child of twelve.[1] All co-operate in this direction in religion, and even in the mystic part of it. Byzantine distinctions and subtleties have been allowed to fall away; Germanic curiosities and speculations have not been introduced; the God of conscience reigns alone; feminine sweetness has been cut off; we do not find the husband of souls, the lovable consoler, whom the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* follows even in his tender dreams; something manly breathes from religion in England; we find that the Old Testament, the severe Hebrew Psalms, have left their imprint here. It is no longer an intimate friend to whom a man confides his petty desires, his small troubles, a sort of affectionate and quite human priestly guide; it is no longer a king whose relations and courtiers he tries to gain over, and from whom he looks for favours or places; we see in him only a guardian of duty, and we speak to him of nothing else. What we ask of him is the strength to be virtuous, the inner renewal by which we become capable of always doing good; and such a prayer is in itself a sufficient lever to tear a man from his weaknesses. What we know of the Deity is that he is perfectly just; and such a reliance suffices to represent all the events of life as an approach to the reign of justice. Strictly speaking, justice alone exists; the world is a figure which conceals it, but heart and conscience sustain it, and there is nothing important or true in man but the embrace by which he holds it. So speak the old grave prayers, the severe hymns which are sung in the church, accompanied by the organ. Though a Frenchman, and brought up in a different religion, I heard them with sincere admiration and emotion. Serious and grand poems, which, opening a path to the Infinite, let a ray of light into the limitless darkness, and satisfy the deep poetic instincts, the vague desire of sublimity and melancholy, which this race has manifested from its origin, and which it has preserved to the end.

V.

At the basis of the present as of the past ever reappears an inner and persistent cause, the *character* of the race; transmission and climate have maintained it; a violent perturbation—the Norman Conquest—

[1] *The Wide, Wide World*, by Elizabeth Wetherell (an American book). See also the novels of Miss Yonge, and, above all, those of George Eliot.

warped it; finally, after various oscillations, it was manifested by the conception of a special ideal, which gradually fashioned or produced religion, literature, institutions. Thus fixed and expressed, it was thenceforth the mover of the rest; it explains the present, on it depends the future; its force and direction will produce the present and future civilisation. Now that great historic violences—I mean the destructions and enslavements of peoples—have become almost impracticable, each nation can develop its life according to its own conception of life; the chances of a war, a discovery, have no hold but on details; national inclinations and aptitudes alone now draw the great features of a national history; when twenty-five million men conceive the good and useful after a certain type, they will seek and end by attaining this kind of the good and useful. The Englishman has henceforth his priest, his gentleman, his manufacture, his comfort, and his novel. If you wish to seek in what sense this work will alter, you must seek in what sense the central conception will alter. A vast revolution has taken place during the last three centuries in human intelligence,—like those regular and vast uprisings which, displacing a continent, displace all the prospects. We know that positive discoveries go on increasing day by day, that they will increase daily more and more, that from object to object they reach the most lofty, that they begin by renewing the science of man, that their useful application and their philosophical consequences are ceaselessly unfolded; in short, that their universal encroachment will at last comprise the whole human mind. From this body of invading truths springs in addition an original conception of the good and the useful, and, moreover, a new idea of state and church, art and industry, philosophy and religion. This has its power, as the old idea had; it is scientific, if the other was national; it is supported on proved facts, if the other was upon established things. Already their opposition is being manifested; already their results begin; and we may affirm beforehand, that the proximate condition of English civilisation will depend upon their divergence and their agreement.

BOOK V.

MODERN AUTHORS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The translator thinks it due to M. Taine to state, that the fifth book, on the *Modern Authors*, was written whilst Dickens, Thackeray, and Macaulay were still alive. He also gives the original preface of that book:—

'This fifth book is the sequel to the *History of English Literature;* it is written on another plan, because the subject is different. The present period is not yet completed, and the ideas which govern it are in process of formation, that is, in the rough. We cannot therefore as yet systematically arrange them. When documents are still mere indications, history is necessarily reduced to studies; science is moulded on existence; and our conclusions cannot be other than incomplete, so long as the facts which suggest them are unfinished. Fifty years hence the history of this age may be written; in the meantime we can but sketch it. I have selected from contemporary English writers the most original minds, the most consistent, and the most contrasted; they may be regarded as specimens, representing the common features, the opposite tendencies, and consequently the general direction of the public mind.

'They are only specimens. By the side of Macaulay and Carlyle we have historians like Hallam, Buckle, and Grote; by the side of Dickens, novel-writers like Bulwer, Charlotte Bronte, Mrs. Gaskell, George Eliot, and many more; by the side of Tennyson, poets like Elizabeth Browning; by the side of Stuart Mill, philosophers like Hamilton, Bain, and Herbert Spencer. I pass over the vast number of men of talent who write anonymously in reviews, and who, like soldiers in an army, display at times more clearly than their generals the faculties and inclinations of their time and their country. If we look for the common marks in this multitude of varied minds, we shall, I think, find the two salient features which I have already pointed out. One of these features is proper to English civilisation, the other to the civilisation of the nineteenth century. The one is national, the other European. On the one hand, special to this people, their literature is an inquiry instituted into humanity, altogether positive, and consequently only partially beautiful or philosophical, but very exact, minute, useful, and moreover very moral; and this to such a degree, that sometimes the generosity or purity of its aspirations raises it to a height which no artist or philosopher has transcended. On the other hand, in common with the various peoples of our age, this literature subordinates dominant creeds and institutions to private inquiry and established science—I mean, to that irresponsible tribunal which is erected in each man's individual conscience, and to that universal authority which the diverse human judgments, mutually rectified, and controlled by practice, borrow from the verifications of experience, and from their own harmony.

'Whatever be the judgment passed on these tendencies and on these doctrines, we cannot, I think, refuse them the merit of spontaneity and originality. They are living and thriving plants. The six writers, described in this volume, have

expressed efficacious and complete ideas on God, nature, man, science, religion, art, and morality. To produce such ideas we have in Europe at this day but three nations—England, Germany, and France. Those of England will here be found arranged, discussed, and compared with those of the other two thinking countries.'

CHAPTER I.

The Novel.—Dickens.

§ 1.—The Author.

I. Connection of the different elements of a talent—Importance of the imaginative faculty.

II. Lucidity and intensity of imagination in Dickens—Boldness and vehemence of his fancy—How with him inanimate objects are personified and impassioned—Wherein his conception is akin to intuition—How he describes idiots and madmen.

III. The objects to which he directs his enthusiasm—His trivialities and minuteness—Wherein he resembles the painters of his country—Wherein he differs from George Sand—*Miss Ruth* and *Geneviève*—A journey in a coach.

IV. Vehemence of the emotions which this kind of imagination must produce—His pathos—*Stephen*, the factory hand—His humour—Why he attains to buffoonery and caricature—Recklessness and nervous exaggeration of his gaiety.

§ 2.—The Public.

English novels are compelled to be moral—Wherein this constraint modifies the idea of love—Comparison of love in George Sand and Dickens—Pictures of the young girl and the wife—Wherein this constraint qualifies the idea of passion—Comparison of passions in Balzac and Dickens—Inconvenience of this foregone necessity—How comic or odious masks are substituted for natural characters—Comparison of *Pecksniff* and *Tartuffe*—Why unity of action is absent in Dickens.

§ 3.—The Characters.

I. Two classes of characters—Natural and instinctive characters—Artificial and positive characters—Preference of Dickens for the first—Aversion against the second.

II. The hypocrite—Mr. Pecksniff—Wherein he is English—Comparison of *Pecksniff* and *Tartuffe*—The positive man—Mr. Gradgrind—The proud man—Mr. Dombey—Wherein these characters are English.

III. Children—Wanting in French literature—Little *Joas* and *David Copperfield*—Men of the lower orders.

IV. The ideal man according to Dickens—Wherein this conception corresponds to a public need—Opposition of culture and nature in England—Reassertion of sense and instinct oppressed by conventionalism and rule—Success of Dickens.

WERE Dickens dead, his biography might be written. On the day after the burial of a celebrated man, his friends and enemies apply themselves to the work; his schoolfellows relate in the newspapers his boyish pranks; another man recalls exactly, and word for word, the conversations he had with him a score of years ago. The lawyer, who manages the affairs of the deceased, draws up a list of the different offices he has filled, his titles, dates and figures, and reveals to the matter-of-fact readers how the money left has been invested, and how the fortune has been made; the grandnephews and second cousins publish an account of his acts of humanity, and the catalogue of his domestic virtues. If there is no literary genius in the family, they select an Oxford man, conscientious, learned, who treats the dead like a Greek author, amasses endless documents, involves them in endless comments, crowns the whole with endless discussions, and comes ten years later, some fine Christmas morning, with his white tie and placid smile, to present to the assembled family three quartos, of eight hundred pages, the easy style of which would send a German from Berlin to sleep. He is embraced by them with tears in their eyes; they make him sit down; he is the chief ornament of the festivities; and his work is sent to the *Edinburgh Review*. The latter groans at the sight of the enormous present, and tells off a young and intrepid member of the staff to concoct some kind of a biography from the table of contents. Another advantage of posthumous biographies is, that the dead man is no longer there to refute either biographer or man of learning.

Unfortunately Dickens is still alive, and refutes the biographies made of him. What is worse, he claims to be his own biographer. His translator in French once asked him for a few particulars of his life; Dickens replied that he kept them for himself. Without doubt, *David Copperfield*, his best novel, has much the appearance of a confession; but where does the confession end, and how far does fiction embroider truth? All that is known, or rather all that is told, is that Dickens was born in 1812, that he is the son of a shorthand-writer, that he was himself at first a shorthand-writer, that he was poor and unfortunate in his youth, that his novels, published in parts, have gained for him a great fortune and an immense reputation. The reader may conjecture the rest; Dickens will tell him it one day, when he writes his memoirs. Meanwhile he closes the door, and leaves outside the too inquisitive folk who go on knocking. He has a right to do so. Though a man may be illustrious, he is not on that account public property; he is not constrained to be confidential; he still belongs to himself; he may reserve of himself what he thinks proper. If we give our works to our readers, we do not give our lives. Let us be satisfied with what Dickens has given us. Forty volumes suffice, and more than suffice, to enable us to know a man well; moreover, they show of him all that it is important to know. It is not through the accidental circumstances of his life that he belongs to history, but by his talent; and his talent is in his books.

A man's genius is like a clock; it has its mechanism, and amongst its parts a mainspring. Find out this spring, show how it communicates movement to the others, pursue this movement from part to part down to the hands in which it ends. This inner history of genius does not depend upon the outer history of the man; and it is worth more.

§ 1.—The Author.

I.

The first question which should be asked in connection with an artist is this: How does he regard objects? With what clearness, what energy, what force? The reply defines his whole work beforehand: for in a writer of novels the imagination is the master faculty; the art of composition, good taste, appreciation of truth, depend upon it; one degree more of vehemence destroys the style which expresses it, changes the characters which it produces, breaks the framework in which it is enclosed. Consider that of Dickens, and you will perceive therein the cause of his faults and his merits, his power and his excess.

II.

He has the painter in him, and the English painter. Never surely did a mind figure to itself with more exact detail or greater energy all the parts and tints of a picture. Read this description of a storm; the images seem photographed by a dazzling electric light:

'The eye, partaking of the quickness of the flashing light, saw in its every gleam a multitude of objects which it could not see at steady noon in fifty times that period. Bells in steeples, with the rope and wheel that moved them; ragged nests of birds in cornices and nooks; faces full of consternation in the tilted waggons that came tearing past: their frightened teams ringing out a warning which the thunder drowned; harrows and ploughs left out in fields; miles upon miles of hedge-divided country, with the distant fringe of trees as obvious as the scarecrow in the beanfield close at hand; in a trembling, vivid, flickering instant, everything was clear and plain: then came a flush of red into the yellow light; a change to blue; a brightness so intense that there was nothing else but light; and then the deepest and profoundest darkness.'[1]

An imagination so lucid and energetic cannot but animate inanimate objects without an effort. It provokes in the mind in which it works extraordinary emotions, and the author pours over the objects which he figures to himself, something of the ever-welling passion which overflows in him. Stones for him take a voice, white walls swell out into big phantoms, black wells yawn hideously and mysteriously in the darkness; legions of strange creatures whirl shuddering over the fantastic landscape; blank nature is peopled, inert matter moves. But the images remain clear; in this madness there is nothing vague or

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xlii. The translator has used the 'Charles Dickens' edition, 1868, 18 vols.

disorderly; imaginary objects are designed with outlines as precise and details as numerous as real objects, and the dream is equal to the truth.

There is, amongst others, a description of the night wind, quaint and powerful, which recalls certain pages of *Notre Dame de Paris*. The source of this description, as of all those of Dickens, is pure imagination. He does not, like Walter Scott, describe in order to give his reader a map, and to lay down the locality of his drama. He does not, like Lord Byron, describe from love of magnificent nature, and in order to display a splendid succession of grand pictures. He dreams neither of attaining exactness nor of selecting beauty. Struck with a certain spectacle, he is transported, and breaks out into unforeseen figures. Now it is the yellow leaves, pursued by the wind, fleeing and jostling, shivering, scared, in a giddy chase, lying in the furrows, drowned in the ditches, perching in the trees.[1] Here it is the night wind, sweeping round a church, moaning as it tries with its unseen hand the windows and the doors, and seeking out some crevices by which to enter:

'And when it has got in; as one not finding what he seeks, whatever that may be; it wails and howls to issue forth again: and not content with stalking through the aisles, and gliding round and round the pillars, and tempting the deep organ, soars up to the roof, and strives to rend the rafters: then flings itself despairingly upon the stones below, and passes, muttering, into the vaults. Anon, it comes up stealthily, and creeps along the walls: seeming to read, in whispers, the Inscriptions sacred to the Dead. At some of these, it breaks out shrilly, as with laughter; and at others, moans and cries as if it were lamenting.'[2]

Hitherto you have only recognised the sombre imagination of a man of the north. A little further you perceive the impassioned religion of a revolutionary Protestant, when he speaks to you of 'a ghostly sound too, lingering within the altar; where it seems to chaunt, in its

[1] 'It was small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves; but this wind happening to come up with a great heap of them just after venting its humonr on the insulted Dragon, did so disperse and scatter them that they fled away, pell-mell, some here, some there, rolling over each other, whirling round and round upon their thin edges, taking frantic flights into the air, and playing all manner of extraordinary gambols in the extremity of their distress. Nor was this enough for its malicious fury: for, not rontent with driving them abroad, it charged small parties of them and hunted them into the wheelwright's saw-pit, and below the planks and timbers in the yard, and, scattering the sawdust in the air, it looked for them underneath, and when it did meet with any, whew! how it drove them on and followed at their heels!

'The scared leaves only flew the faster for all this, and a giddy chase it was: for they got into unfrequented places, where there was no outlet, and where their pursuer kept them eddying round and round at his pleasure; and they crept under the eaves of houses, and clung tightly to the sides of hay-ricks, like bats; and tore in at open chamber windows, and cowered close to hedges; and, in short, went anywhere for safety.'—(*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. ii.)

[2] *The Chimes* first quarter.

wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped; in defiance of the Tables of the Law, which look so fair and smooth, but are so flawed and broken. Ugh! Heaven preserve us, sitting snugly round the fire! It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church!' But an instant after, the artist speaks again; he leads you to the belfry, and in the racket of the accumulated words, communicates to your nerves the sensation of the aerial tempest. The wind whistles, blows, and gambols in the arches:

'High up in the steeple; where it is free to come and go through many an airy arch and loophole, and to twist and twine itself about the giddy stair, and twirl the groaning weathercock, and make the very tower shake and shiver!'[1]

Dickens has seen it all in the old belfry; his thought is a mirror; not the smallest or ugliest detail escapes him. He has counted 'the iron rails ragged with rust;' 'the sheets of lead,' wrinkled and shrivelled, which crackle and heave astonished under the foot which treads them; 'the shabby nests' which 'the birds stuff into corners' of the mossy joists; the gray dust heaped up; 'the speckled spiders, indolent and fat with long security,' which, hanging by a thread, 'swing idly to and fro in the vibration of the bells,' and which on a sudden alarm climb up like sailors on their ropes, or 'drop upon the ground and ply a score of nimble legs to save a life.' This picture captivates us. Kept up at such a height, amongst the fleeting clouds which spread their shadows over the town, and the feeble lights scarce distinguished in the mist, we feel a sort of vertigo; and we hardly fail to discover, with Dickens, thought and a soul in the metallic voice of the chimes which inhabit this trembling castle.

He makes a story out of them, and it is not the first. Dickens is a poet; he is as much at home in the imaginative world as in the actual. Here the chimes are talking to the old messenger, and consoling him. Elsewhere it is the Cricket on the Hearth singing of all domestic joys, and bringing before the eyes of the desolate master the happy evenings, the sanguine hopes, the happiness, the quiet cheerfulness which he has enjoyed, and which he has no longer In another tale it is the history of a sick and precocious child who feels itself dying, and who, sleeping in the arms of its sister, hears the distant song of the murmuring waves which rocked him to sleep. Objects, with Dickens, take their hue from the thoughts of his characters His imagination is so lively, that it carries everything with it in the path which it chooses. If the character is happy, the stones, flowers, and clouds must be happy too; if he is sad, nature must weep with him. Even to the ugly houses in the street, all speak. The style runs through a swarm of visions; it breaks out into the strangest oddities. Here is a young girl, pretty and good, who crosses Fountain Court and the low purlieus in search of her brother. What more simple? what even

[1] *The Chimes*, first quarter.

more vulgar? Dickens is carried away by it. To entertain her, he summons up birds, trees, houses, the fountain, the offices, law papers, and much besides. It is a folly, and it is all but an enchantment:

'Whether there was life enough left in the slow vegetation of Fountain Court for the smoky shrubs to have any consciousness of the brightest and purest-hearted little woman in the world, is a question for gardeners, and those who are learned in the loves of plants. But, that it was a good thing for that same paved yard to have such a delicate little figure flitting through it; that it passed like a smile from the grimy old houses, and the worn flagstones, and left them duller, darker, sterner than before; there is no sort of doubt. The Temple fountain might have leaped up twenty feet to greet the spring of hopeful maidenhood, that in her person stole on, sparkling, through the dry and dusty channels of the Law; the chirping sparrows, bred in Temple chinks and crannies, might have held their peace to listen to imaginary sky-larks, as so fresh a little creature passed; the dingy boughs, unused to droop, otherwise than in their puny growth, might have bent down in a kindred gracefulness, to shed their benedictions on her graceful head; old love-letters, shut up in iron boxes in the neighbouring offices, and made of no account among the heaps of family papers into which they had strayed, and of which, in their degeneracy, they formed a part, might have stirred and fluttered with a moment's recollection of their ancient tenderness, as she went lightly by. Anything might have happened that did not happen, and never will, for the love of Ruth.'[1]

This is far-fetched, without doubt. French taste, always measured, revolts against these affected strokes, these sickly prettinesses. And yet this affectation is natural; Dickens does not hunt after quaintnesses; they come to him. His excessive imagination is like a string too tightly stretched; it produces of itself, without any violent shock, sounds not otherwise heard.

We shall see how it is excited. Imagine a shop, no matter what shop, the most repulsive; that of a marine store dealer. Dickens sees the barometers, chronometers, telescopes, compasses, charts, maps, sextants, speaking trumpets, and so forth. He sees so many, sees them so clearly, they are crowded and crammed, they replace each other so forcibly in his brain, which they fill and litter; there are so many geographical and nautical ideas scattered under the glass-cases hung from the ceiling, nailed to the wall, they swamp him from so many sides, and in such abundance, that he loses his judgment 'The shop itself, partaking of the general infection, seemed almost to become a snug, sea-going, ship-shape concern, wanting only good sea-room, in the event of an unexpected launch, to work its way securely to any desert island in the world.'[2]

The difference between a madman and a man of genius is not very great. Napoleon, who knew men, said so to Esquirol.[3] The same faculty leads us to glory or throws us in a cell in a lunatic asylum. It is visionary imagination which forges the phantoms of the madman

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xlv.

[2] *Dombey and Son*, ch. iv

[3] See vol. i. note 1, page 349.

and creates the personages of an artist, and the classifications serving for the first may serve for the second. The imagination of Dickens is like that of monomaniacs. To plunge oneself into an idea, to be absorbed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it under a hundred forms, to enlarge it, to carry it thus enlarged to the eye of the spectator, to dazzle and overwhelm him with it, to stamp it upon him so tenacious and impressive that he can never again tear it from his memory,—these are the great features of this imagination and style. In this, *David Copperfield* is a masterpiece. Never did objects remain more visible and present to the memory of a reader than those which he describes. The old house, the parlour, the kitchen, Peggotty's boat, and above all the school-yard, are interiors whose relief, energy, and precision are unequalled. Dickens has the passion and patience of the painters of his nation; he reckons his details one by one, notes the various hues of the old tree-trunks; sees the dilapidated cask, the green and broken flagstones, the chinks of the damp walls; he distinguishes the strange smells which rise from them; marks the size of the mossy spots, reads the names of the scholars carved on the door, and dwells on the form of the letters. And this minute description has nothing cold about it: if it is thus detailed, it is because the contemplation was intense; it proves its passion by its exactness. We felt this passion without accounting for it; suddenly we find it at the end of a page; the boldness of the style renders it visible, and the violence of the phrase attests the violence of the impression. Excessive metaphors bring before the mind grotesque fancies. We feel ourselves beset by extravagant visions. Mr. Mell takes his flute, and blows on it, says Copperfield, 'until I almost thought he would gradually blow his whole being into the large hole at the top, and ooze away at the keys.'[1] We think of Hoffmann's fantastic tales; we are arrested by a fixed idea, and our head begins to ache. These eccentricities are the style of sickness rather than of health.

'Tom Pinch, disabused at last, discovers that his master Pecksniff is a hypocritical rogue. He had so long been used to steep the Pecksniff of his fancy in his tea, and spread him out upon his toast, and take him as a relish with his beer, that he made but a poor breakfast on the first morning after his expulsion.'[2]

Therefore Dickens is admirable in the depicture of hallucinations. We see that he feels himself those of his characters, that he is engrossed by their ideas, that he enters into their madness. As an Englishman and a moralist, he has described remorse frequently. Perhaps it may be said that he makes a scarecrow of it, and that an artist is wrong to transform himself into an assistant of the policeman and the preacher. What of that? The portrait of Jonas Chuzzlewit is so terrible, that we may pardon it for being useful. Jonas, leaving his chamber secretly, has treacherously murdered his enemy, and thinks thenceforth to

[1] *David Copperfield*, ch. v. [2] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xxxvi

breathe in peace; but the recollection of the murder gradually disorganises his mind, like poison. He is no longer able to control his ideas; they bear him on with the fury of a terrified horse. He is for ever thinking, and shuddering as he thinks, of the chamber where they believed he slept. He sees this chamber, counts the pattern, pictures the long folds of the dark curtains, the hollows of the bed which he has disarranged, the door at which some one might have knocked. The more he wants to escape from this vision, the more he is immersed in it; it is a burning gulf in which he rolls, struggling, with cries and sweats of agony. He fancies himself lying in his bed, as he ought to be, and an instant after he sees himself there. He fears this other self. The dream is so vivid, that he is not sure that he is not in London. 'He became in a manner his own ghost and phantom.' And this imaginary being, like a mirror, only redoubles before his conscience the image of assassination and punishment. He returns, and shuffles, with pale face, to the door of his chamber. He, a man of business, a reckoner, a coarse machine of positive reasoning, has become as fanciful as a nervous woman. He advances on tiptoe, as if he were afraid of rousing the imaginary man, whom he pictures lying in the bed. At the moment when he turns the key in the lock, 'a monstrous fear beset his mind. What if the murdered man were there before him!' At last he enters, and buries himself in his bed, burnt up with fever. 'He buried himself beneath the blankets,' so as to try not to see the cursed room; he sees it more clearly still. The rustling of the coverings, the buzz of an insect, the beatings of his heart, all cry to him, Murderer! His mind fixed with 'an agony of listening' on the door, he ends by thinking that people open it; he hears it creak. His senses are distorted; he dares not mistrust them, he dares no longer believe in them; and in this nightmare, in which drowned reason leaves nothing but a chaos of hideous forms, he finds no reality but the incessant burden of his convulsive despair. Thenceforth all his thoughts, dangers, the whole world disappears for him in 'the one dread question only,' 'When would they find the body in the wood?' He forces himself to distract his thoughts from this; they remain stamped and glued to it; they hold him to it as by a chain of iron. He continually figures himself going into the wood, 'going softly about it and about it among the leaves, approaching it nearer and nearer through a gap in the boughs, and startling the very flies, that were thickly sprinkled all over it, like heaps of dried currants.' And he always ends with the idea of the discovery; he expects news of it, listening rapt to the cries and shouts in the street, hearing men come in and go out, come up and go down. At the same time, he has ever before his eyes that corpse 'lying alone in the wood;' 'he was for ever showing and presenting it, as it were, to every creature whom he saw. Look here! do you know of this? Is it found? Do you suspect me?' If he had been condemned to bear the body in his arms, and lay it down for recogni-

tion at the feet of every one he met, it could not have been more constantly with him, or a cause of more monotonous and dismal occupation than it was in this state of his mind.[1]

Jonas is on the verge of madness. There are other characters quite mad. Dickens has drawn three or four portraits of madmen, very agreeable at first sight, but so true that they are in reality horrible. It needed an imagination like his, irregular, excessive, capable of fixed ideas, to exhibit the derangements of reason. Two especially there are, which make us laugh, and which make us shudder. Augustus, the gloomy maniac, who is on the point of marrying Miss Pecksniff; and poor Mr. Dick, half an idiot, half a monomaniac, who lives with Miss Trotwood. To understand these sudden exaltations, these unforeseen gloominesses, these incredible summersaults of perverted sensibility; to reproduce these hiatuses of thought, these interruptions of reasoning, this recurrence of a word, always the same, which breaks in upon a phrase attempted and overturns renascent reason; to see the stupid smile, the vacant look, the foolish and uneasy physiognomy of these haggard old children who painfully involve idea in idea, and stumble at every step on the threshold of the truth which they cannot attain, is a faculty which Hoffmann alone has possessed in an equal degree with Dickens. The play of these shattered reasons is like the creaking of a dislocated door; it makes one sick to hear it. We find, if we like, a discordant burst of laughter, but we discover still more easily a groan and a lamentation, and we are terrified to gauge the lucidity, strangeness, exaltation, violence of imagination which has produced such creations, which has carried them on and sustained them unbendingly to the end, and which found itself in its proper sphere in imitating and producing their irrationality.

III.

To what can this force be applied? Imaginations differ not only in their nature, but also in their object; after having gauged their energy, we must define their domain; in the broad world the artist makes a world for himself; involuntarily he chooses a class of objects which he prefers; others do not warm his genius, and he does not perceive them. Dickens does not perceive great things; this is the second feature of his imagination. Enthusiasm seizes him in connection with everything, especially in connection with vulgar objects, a curiosity shop, a sign-post, a town-crier. He has vigour, he does not attain beauty. His instrument gives vibrating sounds, but not harmonious. If he is describing a house, he will draw it with geometrical clearness; he will put all its colours in relief, discover a face and thought in the shutters and the pipes; he will make a sort of human being out of the house, grimacing and forcible, which will chain our regard, and which we shall never forget; but he will not see the grandeur of the long

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit* ch. li.

monumental lines, the calm majesty of the broad shadows boldly divided by the white plaster, the cheerfulness of the light which covers them, and becomes palpable in the black niches in which it is poured, as though to rest and to sleep. If he is painting a landscape, he will perceive the haws which dot with their red fruit the leafless hedges, the thin vapour streaming from a distant stream, the motions of an insect in the grass; but the deep poetry which would have seized the author of *Valentine* and *André* will escape him. He will be lost, like the painters of his country, in the minute and impassioned observation of small things; he will have no love of beautiful forms and fine colours. He will not perceive that the blue and the red, the straight line and the curve, are enough to compose vast concerts, which amidst so many various expressions maintain a grand serenity, and open up in the depths of the soul a spring of health and happiness. Happiness is lacking in him; his inspiration is a feverish rapture, which does not select its objects, which animates promiscuously the ugly, the vulgar, the ridiculous, and which, communicating to his creations an indescribable jerkiness and violence, deprives them of the delight and harmony which in other hands they might have retained. Miss Ruth is a very pretty housekeeper; she puts on her apron: what a treasure this apron is! Dickens turns it over and over, like a milliner's shopman who wants to sell it. She holds it in her hands, then she puts it round her waist, ties the strings, spreads it out, smoothes it that it may fall well. What does she not do with her apron? And how delighted is Dickens during these innocent occupations! He utters little exclamations of joyous fun. 'Oh heaven, what a wicked little stomacher!' He apostrophises a ring, he sports round Ruth, claps his hands for pleasure. It is much worse when she is making the pudding; there is a whole scene, dramatic and lyric, with exclamations, protasis, sudden inversions, as complete as a Greek tragedy. These kitchen refinements and this waggery of imagination make us think (by way of contrast) of the interior pictures of George Sand, of the room of Geneviève the flower-girl. She, like Ruth, is making a useful object, very useful, since she will sell it to-morrow for tenpence; but this object is a full-blown rose, whose fragile petals are moulded by her fingers as by the fingers of a fairy, whose fresh corolla is purpled with a vermilion as tender as that of her cheeks; a fragile masterpiece which has bloomed on an evening of poetic emotion, whilst from her window she beholds in the sky the piercing and divine eyes of the stars, and in the depths of her virgin heart murmurs the first breath of love. Dickens does not need such a sight for his transports; a stage-coach throws him into dithyrambs; the wheels, the splashing, the cracking whip, the clatter of the horses, harness, the vehicle; here is enough to transport him. He feels sympathetically the motion of the coach; it bears him along with it; he hears the gallop of the horses in his brain, and goes off uttering this ode, which seems to proceed from the guard's horn:

'Yoho, among the gathering shades; making of no account the deep reflections of the trees, but scampering on through light and darkness, all the same, as if the light of London, fifty miles away, were quite enough to travel by, and some to spare. Yoho, beside the village green, where cricket-players linger yet, and every little indentation made in the fresh grass by bat or wicket, ball or player's foot, sheds out its perfume on the night. Away with four fresh horses from the Bald-faced Stag, where topers congregate about the door admiring; and the last team, with traces hanging loose, go roaming off towards the pond, until observed and shouted after by a dozen throats, while volunteering boys pursue them. Now, with a clattering of hoofs and striking out of fiery sparks, across the old stone bridge, and down again into the shadowy road, and through the open gate, and far away, away, into the wold. Yoho!

'Yoho, behind there, stop that bugle for a moment! Come creeping over to the front, along the coach-roof, guard, and make one at this basket! Not that we slacken in our pace the while, not we: we rather put the bits of blood upon their mettle, for the greater glory of the snack. Ah! It is long since this bottle of old wine was brought into contact with the mellow breath of night, you may depend, and rare good stuff it is to wet a bugler's whistle with. Only try it. Don't be afraid of turning up your finger, Bill, another pull! Now, take your breath, and try the bugle, Bill. There's music! There's a tone! "Over the hills and far away," indeed, Yoho! The skittish mare is all alive to-night. Yoho! Yoho!

'See the bright moon; high up before we know it; making the earth reflect the objects on its breast like water. Hedges, trees, low cottages, church steeples, blighted stumps and flourishing young slips, have all grown vain upon the sudden, and mean to contemplate their own fair images till morning. The poplars yonder rustle, that their quivering leaves may see themselves upon the ground. Not so the oak; trembling does not become *him;* and he watches himself in his stout old burly stedfastness, without the motion of a twig. The moss-grown gate, ill poised upon its creaking hinges, crippled and decayed, swings to and fro before its glass like some fantastic dowager; while our own ghostly likeness travels on, Yoho! Yoho! through ditch and brake, upon the ploughed land and the smooth, along the steep hill-side and steeper wall, as if it were a phantom-Hunter.

'Clouds too! And a mist upon the Hollow! Not a dull fog that hides it, but a light, airy, gauze-like mist, which in our eyes of modest admiration gives a new charm to the beauties it is spread before: as real gauze has done ere now, and would again, so please you, though we were the Pope. Yoho! Why, now we travel like the Moon herself. Hiding this minute in a grove of trees, next minute in a patch of vapour, emerging now upon our broad, clear course, withdrawing now, but always dashing on, our journey is a counterpart of hers. Yoho! A match against the Moon!

'The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when Day comes leaping up. Yoho! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares; past waggons, coaches, carts; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads; past brick and mortar in its every shape; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty-seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve! Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old Inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London!'[1]

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xxxvi.

All this to tell us that Tom Pinch is come to London! This fit of lyricism, in which the most poetic extravagances spring from the most vulgar commonplaces, like sickly flowers growing in a broken old flower-pot, displays in its natural and quaint contrasts all the sides of Dickens' imagination. We shall have his portrait if we picture to ourselves a man who, with a stewpan in one hand and a postilion's whip in the other, took to making prophecies.

IV.

The reader already foresees what vehement emotions this species of imagination will produce. The mode of conception in a man governs the mode of thought. When the mind, barely attentive, follows the indistinct outlines of a rough sketched image, joy and grief glide past him with insensible touch. When the mind, with rapt attention, penetrates the minute details of a precise image, joy and grief shake the whole man. Dickens has this attention, and sees these details: this is why he meets everywhere with objects of exaltation. He never abandons his impassioned tone; he never rests in a natural style and in simple narrative; he only rails or weeps; he writes but satires or elegies. He has the feverish sensibility of a woman who laughs loudly, or melts into tears at the sudden shock of the slightest occurrence. This impassioned style is extremely potent, and to it may be attributed half the glory of Dickens. The majority of men have only weak emotions. We labour mechanically, and yawn much; three-fourths of the things leave us cold; we go to sleep by habit, and we end by ceasing to remark the household scenes, petty details, stale adventures, which are the basis of our existence. A man comes, who suddenly renders them interesting; nay, who makes them dramatic, changes them into objects of admiration, tenderness, and dread. Without leaving the fireside or the omnibus, we are trembling, our eyes full of tears, or shaken by fits of inextinguishable laughter. We are transformed, our life is doubled, our soul had been vegetating; now it feels, suffers, loves. The contrast, the rapid succession, the number of the sentiments, add further to its trouble; we are immersed for two hundred pages in a torrent of new emotions, contrary and increasing, which communicates its violence to the mind, which carries it away in digressions and falls, and only casts it on the bank enchanted and exhausted. It is an intoxication, and on a delicate soul the effect would be too forcible; but it suits the English public, and that public has justified it.

This sensibility can hardly have more than two issues—laughter and tears. There are others, but they are only reached by lofty eloquence; they are the path to sublimity, and we have seen that for Dickens this path is cut off. Yet there is no writer who knows better how to touch and melt; he makes us weep, absolutely shed tears; before reading him we did not know there was so much pity in the heart. The grief of a child, who wishes to be loved by his father, and whom his father

does not love; the despairing love and slow death of a poor half-imbecile young man: all these pictures of secret grief leave an ineffaceable impression. The tears which he sheds are genuine, and comparison is their only source. Balzac, George Sand, Stendahl have also recorded human miseries; is it possible to write without recording them? But they do not seek them out, they hit upon them; they do not dream of displaying them to us; they were going elsewhere, and met them on their way. They love art better than men. They delight only in setting in motion the springs of passions, in combining large systems of events, in constructing powerful characters: they do not write from sympathy with the wretched, but from love of beauty. When you have finished George Sand's *Mauprat*, your emotion is not pure sympathy; you feel, in addition, a deep admiration for the greatness and the generosity of love. When you have come to the end of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, your heart is bruised by the tortures of that anguish; but the astonishing inventiveness, the accumulation of facts, the abundance of general ideas, the force of analysis, transport you into the world of science, and your painful sympathy is calmed by the spectacle of this physiology of the heart. Dickens never calms our sympathy; he selects subjects in which it alone, and more than elsewhere, is unfolded: the long oppression of children persecuted and starved by their schoolmaster; the life of the factory-hand Stephen, robbed and degraded by his wife, driven away by his fellows, accused of theft, lingering six days at the bottom of a pit into which he has fallen, maimed, consumed by fever, and dying when he is at length discovered. Rachael, his only friend, is there; and his delirium, his cries, the storm of despair in which Dickens envelopes his characters, have prepared the way for the painful picture of this resigned death. The bucket brings up a poor, crushed human creature, and we see 'the pale, worn, patient face looking up to the sky, whilst the right hand, shattered and hanging down, seems as if waiting to be taken by another hand.' Yet he smiles, and feebly said 'Rachael!' She stooped down, and bent over him until her eyes were between his and the sky, for he could not so much as turn them to look at her. Then in broken words he tells her of his long agony. Ever since he was born he has met with nothing but misery and injustice; it is the rule—the weak suffer, and are made to suffer. This pit into which he had fallen 'has cost hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives—fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands an' thousands, an' keeping 'em fro' want and hunger. . . . The men that works in pits . . . ha' pray'n an' pray'n the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children, that they loves as well as gentlefok loves theirs;' all in vain. 'When the pit was in work, it killed wi'out need; when 't is let alone, it kills wi'out need.'[1] Stephen says this without anger, quietly merely, as the truth. He has his

[1] *Hard Times*, bk. 3, ch. vi.

calumniator before him; he does not get angry, accuses no one; he only charges the father to deny the calumny as soon as he shall be dead. His heart is up there in heaven, where he has seen a star shining. In his agony, on his bed of stones, he has gazed upon it, and the tender and touching regard of the divine star has calmed, by its mystical serenity, the anguish of mind and body.

'"It ha' shined upon me," he said reverently, "in my pain and trouble down below. It ha' shined into my mind. I ha' lookn at't and thowt o' thee, Rachael, till the muddle in my mind have cleared awa, above a bit, I hope. If soom ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' me better, I, too, ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' them better.

'"In my pain an' trouble, lookin' up yonder,—wi' it shinin' on me.—I ha' seen more clear, and ha' made it my dyin' prayer that aw th' world may on'y coom toogether more, an' get a better unnerstan'in' o' one another, than when I were in't my own weak seln.

'"Often as I coom to myseln, and found it shinin' on me down there in my trouble, I thowt it were the star as guided to Our Saviour's home. I awmust think it be the very star!"

'They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape; Rachael always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest.'[1]

This same writer is the most railing, the most comic, the most jocose of English authors. And it is moreover a singular gaiety! It is the only kind which would harmonise with this impassioned sensibility. There is a laughter akin to tears. Satire is the sister of elegy: if the second pleads for the oppressed, the first combats the oppressors. Wounded by misfortunes and vices, Dickens avenges himself by ridicule. He does not paint, he punishes. Nothing could be more damaging than those long chapters of sustained irony, in which the sarcasm is pressed, line after line, more sanguinary and piercing in the chosen adversary. There are five or six against the Americans,—their bribed newspapers, their drunken journalists, their cheating speculators, their women authors, their coarseness, their familiarity, their insolence, their brutality,—enough to captivate an absolutist, and to justify the Liberal who, returning from New York, embraced with tears in his eyes the first gendarme whom he saw on landing at Havre. Foundations of industrial societies, interviews of a member of Parliament and his constituents, instructions of a member of the House of Commons to his secretary, the display of great banking-houses, the laying of the first stone of a public building, every kind of ceremony and lie of English society, are depicted with the fire and bitterness of Hogarth. There are parts where the comic element is so violent, that it has the appearance of a vengeance—as the story of Jonas Chuzzlewit

[1] *Hard Times*, bk. 3, ch. vi.

'The very first word which this excellent boy learnt to spell was gain, and the second (when he came into two syllables) was money.' This fine education had unfortunately produced two results: first, that, 'having been long taught by his father to overreach everybody, he had imperceptibly acquired a love of overreaching that venerable monitor himself;' secondly, that being taught to regard everything as a matter of property, 'he had gradually come to look with impatience on his parent as a certain amount of personal estate,' who would be very well 'secured' in that particular description of strong-box which is commonly called a coffin, and banked in the grave.[1] 'Is that my father snoring, Pecksniff?' asked Jonas; 'tread upon his foot; will you be so good? The foot next you is the gouty one.'[2] He is introduced to us with this mark of attention; you may judge of the rest. At bottom, Dickens is gloomy, like Hogarth; but, like Hogarth, he makes us burst with laughter by the buffoonery of his inventions and the violence of his caricatures. He pushes his characters to absurdity with unwonted boldness. Pecksniff hits off moral phrases and sentimental actions so grotesque, that they make him extravagant. Never were heard such monstrous oratorical displays. Sheridan had already painted an English hypocrite, Joseph Surface; but he differs from Pecksniff as much as a portrait of the eighteenth century differs from a cartoon of *Punch*. Dickens makes hypocrisy so deformed and monstrous, that his hypocrite ceases to resemble a man; you would call him one of those fantastic figures whose nose is greater than his body. This extravagant comicality springs from excess of imagination. Dickens uses the same spring throughout. The better to make us see the object he shows us, he dazzles the reader's eyes with it; but the reader is amused by this irregular fancy: the fire of the execution makes him forget that the scene is improbable, and he laughs heartily as he listens to the undertaker, Mould, enumerating the consolations which filial piety, well backed by money, may find in his shop. What grief could not be softened by

'"Four horses to each vehicle . . . velvet trappings . . . drivers in cloth cloaks and top-boots . . . the plumage of the ostrich, died black . . . any number of walking attendants, dressed in the first style of funeral fashion, and carrying batons tipped with brass . . . a place in Westminster Abbey itself, if he choose to invest it in such a purchase. Oh! do not let us say that gold is dross, when it can buy such things as these." "Ay, Mrs. Gamp, you are right," rejoined the undertaker. "We should be an honoured calling. We do good by stealth, and blush to have it mentioned in our little bills. How much consolation may I—even I," cried Mr. Mould, "have diffused among my fellow-creatures by means of my four long-tailed prancers, never harnessed under ten pund ten!"'[3]

Usually Dickens remains grave whilst drawing his caricatures. English wit consists in saying light jests in a solemn manner. Tone

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch viii. [2] *Ibid* [3] *Ibid.* ch. xix

and ideas are then in contrast; every contrast makes a strong impression. Dickens loves to produce them, and his public to hear them.

If at times he forgets to castigate his neighbour, if he tries to sport, to amuse himself, he is no longer happy over it. The element of the English character is its want of happiness. The ardent and tenacious imagination of Dickens is impressed with things too firmly, to pass lightly and gaily over the surface. He leans, he penetrates, works into, hollows them out; all these violent actions are efforts, and all efforts are sufferings. To be happy, a man must be light-minded, as a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, or sensual, as an Italian of the sixteenth; a man must not get anxious about things, to enjoy them. Dickens does get anxious, and does not enjoy. Take a little comical accident, such as you meet with in the street—a gust of wind, which blows about the garments of a messenger. Scaramouche will grin with good humour; Lesage smile like a diverted man; both will pass by and think no more of it. Dickens muses over it for half a page. He sees so clearly all the effects of the wind, he puts himself so entirely in its place, he imagines for it a will so impassioned and precise, he shakes the clothes of the poor man hither and thither so violently and so long, he turns the gust into a tempest, into a persecution so great, that we are made giddy; and even whilst we laugh, we feel in ourselves too much emotion and compassion to laugh heartily:

'And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was, to wait in, in the winter-time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth, express, from the confines of the earth, to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had expected; for, bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried: "Why, here he is!" Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up over his head like a naughty boy's garments, and his feeble little cane would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand, and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation; and Toby himself, all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, and hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle that he wasn't carried up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails or other portable creatures sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives, on some strange corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown.'[1]

If now you would picture in a glance this imagination,—so lucid, so violent, so passionately fixed on the object selected, so deeply touched by little things, so wholly attached to the details and sentiments of vulgar life, so fertile in incessant emotions, so powerful in rousing painful pity, sarcastic raillery, nervous gaiety,—you must fancy a London street on a rainy winter's night. The flickering light of the gas dazzles your eyes, streams through the shop windows, floods over

[1] *The Chimes*, The First Quarter.

the passing forms; and its harsh light, settling upon their contracted features, brings out, with endless detail and damaging force, their wrinkles, deformities, troubled expression. If in this close and dirty crowd you discover the fresh face of a young girl, this artificial light covers it with false and excessive tones; it makes it stand out against the rainy and cold blackness with a strange halo. The mind is struck with wonder; but you carry your hand to your eyes to cover them, and, whilst you admire the force of this light, you involuntarily think of the true country sun and the tranquil beauty of day.

§ 2.—The Public.

I.

Plant this talent on English soil; the literary opinion of the country will direct its growth and explain its fruits. For this public opinion is its private opinion; it does not submit to it as to an external constraint, but feels it inwardly as an inner persuasion; it does not weary, but develops it, and only repeats aloud what it said to itself in secret.

The counsels of this public taste are somewhat like this; the more powerful because they agree with its natural inclination, and urge it upon its special course:—

'Be moral. All your novels must be such as may be read by young girls. We are practical minds, and we would not have literature corrupt practical life. We believe in family life, and we would not have literature paint the passions which attack family life. We are Protestants, and we have preserved something of the severity of our fathers against enjoyment and passions. Amongst these, love is the worst. Beware against resembling in this respect the most illustrious of our neighbours. Love is the hero of all George Sand's novels Married or not, she thinks it beautiful, holy, sublime in itself; and she says so. Don't believe this; and if you do believe it, don't say it. It is a bad example. Love thus represented makes marriage a secondary matter. It ends in marriage, or destroys it, or does without it, according to circumstances; but whatever it does, it treats it as inferior; it does not recognise any holiness in it, beyond that which love gives it, and holds it impious if it is excluded. A novel of this sort is a plea for the heart, the imagination, enthusiasm, nature; but it is often a plea against society and law: we do not suffer society and law to be touched, directly or indirectly. To present a feeling as divine, to bow before it all institutions, to carry it through a series of generous actions, to sing with a sort of heroic inspiration the combats which it wages and the attacks which it sustains, to enrich it with all the force of eloquence, to crown it with all the flowers of poetry, is to paint the life, which it results in, as more beautiful and loftier than others, to set it far above all passions and duties, in a sublime region, on a throne, whence it shines as a light, a consolation, a hope, and draws all hearts towards

it. Perhaps this is the world of artists; it is not the world of ordinary men. Perhaps it is agreeable to nature; we make nature bend before the interests of society. George Sand paints impassioned women; paint you for us good women. George Sand makes us desire to be in love; do you make us desire to be married.

'This has its disadvantages, without doubt; art suffers by it, if the public gains. Though your characters give the best examples, your works will be of less value. No matter; you may console yourself with the thought that you are moral. Your lovers will be uninteresting; for the only interest natural to their age is the violence of passion, and you cannot paint passion. In *Nicholas Nickleby* you will show two good young men, like all young men, marrying two good young women, like all young women; in *Martin Chuzzlewit* you will show two more good young men, perfectly resembling the other two, marrying again two good young women, perfectly resembling the other two; in *Dombey and Son* there will be only one good young man and one good young woman. Otherwise, no difference. And so on. The number of your marriages is marvellous, and you marry enough couples to people England. More curious still, they are all disinterested, and the young man and young woman snap their fingers at money as sincerely as at the Opéra Comique. You will not cease to dwell on the pretty shynesses of the betrothed, the tears of the mothers, the tears of all the guests, the cheering and touching scenes of the dinner table; you will create a crowd of family pictures, all touching, and all as agreeable as screen-paintings. The reader will be moved; he will think he is beholding the innocent loves and virtuous attentions of a little boy and girl of ten. He should like to say to them: "Good little people, continue to be very proper." But the chief interest will be for young girls, who will learn in how devoted and yet suitable a manner a lover ought to pay his court. If you venture on a seduction, as in *Copperfield*, you will not relate the progress, ardour, intoxication of the amour; you will only depict its miseries, despair, and remorse. If in *Copperfield* and the *Cricket on the Hearth* you present a troubled marriage and a suspected wife, you will make haste to restore peace to the marriage and innocence to the wife; and you will deliver, by her mouth, so splendid a eulogy on marriage, that it might serve for a model to Emile Augier.[1] If in *Hard Times* the wife treads on the border of crime, she shall check herself there. If in *Dombey and Son* she flees from her husband's roof, she will remain pure, will only incur the appearance of crime, and will treat her lover in such a manner that the reader will wish to be the husband. If, lastly, in *Copperfield* you relate the emotions and follies of love, you will rally this poor affection, depict its littlenesses, not venture to make us hear the ardent, generous, undisciplined blast of the all-powerful passion; you will turn it into

[1] A living French author, whose dramas are all said to have a moral purpose.—Tr.

a toy for good children, or a pretty marriage-trinket. But marriage will compensate you. Your genius of observation and taste for details will be exercised on the scenes of domestic life; you will excel in the picture of a fireside, a family dialogue, children on the knees of their mother, a husband watching by lamplight by his sleeping wife, the heart full of joy and courage, because it feels that it is working for its own. You will find charming or grave portraits of women: of Dora, who after marriage continues to be a little girl, whose pouting, prettinesses, childishnesses, laughter, make the house gay, like the chirping of a bird; Esther, whose perfect kindness and divine innocence cannot be affected by trials or years; Agnes, so calm, patient, sensible, pure, worthy of respect, a very model of a wife, sufficient in herself to claim for marriage the respect which we demand for it. And when it is necessary to show the beauty of these duties, the greatness of this conjugal love, the depth of the sentiment which ten years of confidence, cares, and reciprocal devotion have created, you will find in your sensibility, so long constrained, speeches as pathetic as the strongest words of love.[1]

'The worst novels are not those which glorify love. A man must live across the Channel to dare what the French have dared. With them, some admire Balzac; but no man would tolerate him. Some will pretend that he is not immoral; but every one will recognise that he always and everywhere makes morality an abstraction. George Sand has only celebrated one passion; Balzac has celebrated them all. He has considered them as forces; and holding that force is beautiful, he has supported them by their causes, surrounded them by their circumstances, developed them in their effects, pushed them to an extreme, and magnified them so as to make them into sublime monsters, more systematic and more true than the truth. We do not admit that a man only is an artist, and nothing else. We would not have him separate himself from his conscience, and lose sight of the practical We will never consent to see that such is the leading feature of our own Shakspeare; we will not recognise that he, like Balzac, brings his heroes to crime and monomania, and that, like him, he lives in a land of pure logic and imagination. We have changed much since the sixteenth century, and we condemn now what we approved formerly. We would not have the reader interested in a miser, an ambitious man, a rake. And he is interested in them when the writer, neither praising nor blaming, sets himself to unfold the mood, training, phrenology, and habits of mind which have impressed in him this primitive inclination, to prove the necessity of its effects, to lead it through all its stages, to show the greater power which age and contentment give, to expose the irresistible fall which hurls man into madness or death. The reader, caught by this reasoning, admires the

[1] *David Copperfield*, ch. lxv.; the scene between the doctor and his wife

work which it has produced, and forgets to be indignant against the personage created. He says, What a splendid miser! and thinks not of the evils which avarice produces. He becomes a philosopher and an artist, and remembers not that he is an upright man. Always recollect that you are such, and renounce the beauties which may flourish on this evil soil.

'Amongst these the first is greatness. A man must be interested in passions to comprehend their full effect, to count all their springs, to describe their whole course. They are diseases; if a man is content to blame them, he will never know them; if you are not a physiologist, if you are not enamoured of them, if you do not make your heroes out of them, if you do not start with pleasure at the sight of a fine feature of avarice, as at the sight of a valuable symptom, you will not be able to unfold their vast system, and to display their fatal greatness. You will not have this immoral merit; and, moreover, it does not suit your species of mind. Your extreme sensibility, and ever-ready irony, must needs be exercised; you have not sufficient calmness to penetrate to the depths of a character, you prefer to weep over or to rail at him; you lay the blame on him, make him your friend or foe, render him touching or odious; you do not depict him; you are too impassioned, and not enough inquisitive. On the other hand, the tenacity of your imagination, the vehemence and fixity with which you impress your thought into the detail you wish to grasp, limit your knowledge, arrest you in a single feature, prevent you from reaching all the parts of a soul, and from sounding its depths. Your imagination is too lively, too meagre. These, then, are the characters you will outline. You will grasp a personage in a single attitude, you will see of him only that, and you will impose it upon him from beginning to end. His face will have always the same expression, and this expression will be almost always a grimace. They will have a sort of knack which will not quit them. Miss Mercy will laugh at every word; Mark Tapley will say "jolly" in every scene; Mrs. Gamp will be ever talking of Mrs. Harris; Dr. Chillip will not venture a single action free from timidity; Mr. Micawber will speak through three volumes the same kind of emphatic phrases, and will pass five or six times, with comical suddenness, from joy to grief. Each of your characters will be a vice, a virtue, a ridicule personified; and the passion, which you lend it, will be so frequent, so invariable, so absorbing, that it will no longer be like a living man, but an abstraction in man's clothes. The French have a Tartuffe like your Pecksniff, but the hypocrisy which he represents has not destroyed the rest of his character; if he adds to the comedy by his vice, he belongs to humanity by his nature. He has, besides his ridiculous feature, a character and a mood; he is coarse, strong, red in the face, brutal, sensual; the vehemence of his blood makes him bold; his boldness makes him calm; his boldness, his calm, his decisive readiness, his scorn of men, make him a great politician. When he has

entertained the public through five acts, he still offers to the psychologist and the physician more than one subject of study. Your Pecksniff will offer nothing to these. He will only serve to instruct and amuse the public. He will be a living satire of hypocrisy, and nothing more. If you give him a taste for brandy, it is gratuitously; in the mood which you assign to him, nothing requires it: he is so steeped in oily hypocrisy, in softness, in a flowing style, in literary phrases, in tender morality, that the rest of his nature has disappeared; it is a mask, and not a man. But this mask is so grotesque and energetic, that it will be useful to the public, and will diminish the number of hypocrites. It is our end and yours, and the list of your characters will have rather the effect of a book of satires than of a portrait gallery.

'For the same reason, these satires, though united, will continue effectually detached, and will not constitute a genuine collection. You began with essays, and your larger novels are only essays tagged together. The only means of composing a natural and solid whole is to write the history of a passion or of a character, to take them up at their birth, to see them increase, alter, become destroyed, to understand the inner necessity of their development. You do not follow this development; you always keep your character in the same attitude; he is a miser, or a hypocrite, or a good man to the end, and always after the same fashion thus he has no history. You can only change the circumstances in which he is met with, you do not change him; he remains motionless, and at every shock that touches him, emits the same sound. The variety of events which you contrive is therefore only an amusing phantasmagoria; they have no connection, they do not form a system, they are but a heap. You will only write lives, adventures, memoirs, sketches, collections of scenes, and you will not be able to compose an action. But if the literary taste of your nation, added to the natural direction of your genius, imposes upon you moral intentions, forbids you the lofty depicture of characters, vetoes the composition of united aggregates, it presents to your observation, sensibility, and satire, a succession of original figures which belong only to England, which, drawn by your hand, will form a unique gallery, and which, with the stamp of your genius, will offer that of your country and of your time.'

§ 3.—The Characters.

I.

Take away the grotesque characters, who are only introduced to fill up and to excite laughter, and you will find that all Dickens' characters belong to two classes—people who have feelings and emotions, and people who have none. He contrasts the souls which nature creates with those which society deforms. One of his last novels, *Hard Times*, is an abstract of all the rest. He there exalts instinct above reason, intuition of heart above positive science; he attacks education

built on statistics, figures, and facts; overwhelms the positive and mercantile spirit with misfortune and ridicule; combats the pride, hardness, selfishness of the merchant and the aristocrat; falls foul of manufacturing towns, towns of smoke and mud, which fetter the body in an artificial atmosphere, and the mind in a factitious existence. He seeks out poor artisans, mountebanks, a foundling, and crushes beneath their common sense, generosity, delicacy, courage, and sweetness, the false science, false happiness, and false virtue of the rich and powerful who despise them. He satirises oppressive society; praises oppressed nature; and his elegiac genius, like his satirical genius, finds ready to his hand in the English world around him, the sphere which it needs for its development.

II.

The first fruits of English society is hypocrisy. It ripens here under the double breath of religion and morality; we know their popularity and dominion across the Channel. In a country where it is scandalous to laugh on Sunday, where the gloomy Puritan has preserved something of his old rancour against happiness, where the critics of ancient history insert dissertations on the virtue of Nebuchadnezzar, it is natural that the appearance of morality should be serviceable. It is a needful coin: those who lack good money coin bad; and the more public opinion declares it precious, the more it is counterfeited. This vice is therefore English. Mr. Pecksniff is not found in France. His speech would disgust Frenchmen. If they have an affectation, it is not of virtue, but of vice: if they wish to succeed, they would be wrong to speak of their principles: they prefer to confess their weaknesses; and if they have quacks, they are trumpeters of immorality. They had their hypocrites once, but it was when religion was popular. Since Voltaire, Tartuffe is impossible. Frenchmen no longer try to affect a piety which would deceive no one and lead to nothing. Hypocrisy comes and goes, varying with the state of morals, religion, and mind; see, then, how conformable that of Pecksniff is to the dispositions of his country. He does not, like Tartuffe, utter theological phrases; he expands altogether in philanthropic tirades. He has marched with the age; he has become a humanitarian philosopher. He has called his daughters *Mercy* and *Charity*. He is tender, he is kind, he gives vent to domestic effusions. He innocently exhibits, when visited, charming domestic scenes; he displays his paternal heart, marital sentiments, the kindly feeling of a good house-master. The family virtues are honoured now-a-days; he must muffle himself therewith. Orgon formerly said, as instructed by Tartuffe:

> 'Et je verrais périr parents, enfants, mère, et femme,
> Que je m'en soucierais autant que de cela.' [1]

[1] Molière, *Tartuffe*, i vi

Modern virtue and English piety think otherwise; we must not despise this world in view of the next; we must improve it. Tartuffe will speak of his hair-shirt and his discipline; Pecksniff, of his comfortable little parlour, of the charm of friendship, the beauties of nature. He will try to bring men together. He will be like a member of the Peace Society. He will develop the most touching considerations on the benefits and beauties of union among men. It will be impossible to hear him without being affected. Men are refined now-a-days, they have read much elegiac poetry; their sensibility is more active, they can no longer be deceived by the gross impudence of Tartuffe. This is why Mr. Pecksniff will use gestures of sublime long-suffering, smiles of ineffable compassion, starts, movements of recklessness, graces, tendernesses which will seduce the most reserved and charm the most delicate. The English in their Parliament, meetings, associations, public ceremonies, have learned the oratorical phraseology, the abstract terms, the style of political economy, of the newspaper and the prospectus. Pecksniff will talk like a prospectus. He will possess its obscurity, its wordiness, and its emphasis. He will seem to soar above the earth, in the region of pure ideas, in the bosom of truth. He will resemble an apostle, brought up in the *Times* office. He will declaim general ideas on every occasion. He will find a moral lesson in the ham and eggs he has just eaten:

'Even the worldly goods of which we have just disposed, even they have their moral. See how they come and go. Every pleasure is transitory.'[1]

'"The process of digestion, as I have been informed by anatomical friends, is one of the most wonderful works of nature. I do not know how it may be with others, but it is a great satisfaction to me to know, when regaling on my humble fare, that I am putting in motion the most beautiful machinery with which we have any acquaintance. I really feel at such times as if I was doing a public service. When I have wound myself up, if I may employ such a term," said Mr. Pecksniff with exquisite tenderness, "and know that I am Going, I feel that in the lesson afforded by the works within me, I am a Benefactor to my Kind!"'[2]

As he folds his napkin, he will rise to lofty contemplations. You recognise a new species of hypocrisy. Vices, like virtues, change in every age.

The practical, as well as the moral spirit, is English; by commerce, labour, and government, this people has acquired the taste and talent for business; this is why they regard the French as children and madmen. The excess of this disposition is the destruction of imagination and sensibility. Man becomes a speculative machine, in which figures and facts are set in array; he denies the life of the mind and the joys of the heart; he sees in the world nothing but loss and gain; he becomes hard, harsh, greedy, and avaricious; he treats men as machinery; on a certain day he finds himself simply a merchant, banker, statistician; he has ceased to be a man. Dickens has multiplied portraits of the positive

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. ii. [2] *Ibid.* ch. viii.

man—Ralph Nickleby, Scrooge, Anthony Chuzzlewit, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Alderman Cute, Mr. Murdstone and his sister, Bounderby, Gradgrind: there are such in all his novels. Some are so by education, others by nature; but all are odious, for they all take in hand to rail at and destroy kindness, sympathy, compassion, disinterested affections, religious emotions, enthusiasm of fancy, all that is lovely in man. They oppress children, strike women, starve the poor, insult the wretched. The best are machines of polished steel, methodically performing their regular duties, and not knowing that they make others suffer. These kinds of men are not found in France. Their rigidity is not in the French character. They are produced in England by a school which has its philosophy, its great men, its glory, and which has never been established amongst the French. More than once, it is true, French writers have depicted avaricious men, men of business, and shopkeepers: Balzac is full of them; but he explains them by their imbecility, or makes them monsters, like Grandet and Gobseck. Those of Dickens constitute a real class, and represent a national vice. Read this passage of *Hard Times*, and see if, body and soul, Mr. Gradgrind is not wholly English:

'"Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"

'The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum-pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was—all helped the emphasis.

'"In this life we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!"

'The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.[1]

'"Thomas Gradgrind, sir! A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a

[1] *Hard Times*, book i. ch. i.

pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind (all supposititious, non-existent persons), but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind—no, sir!"

'In such terms Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself, whether to his private circle of acquaintance, or to the public in general. In such terms, no doubt, substituting the words "boys and girls" for "sir," Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers before him, who were to be filled so full of facts.'[1]

Another fault arising from the habit of commanding and striving is pride. It abounds in an aristocratic country, and no one has more soundly rated aristocracy than Dickens; all his portraits are sarcasms. James Harthouse, a dandy disgusted with everything, chiefly with himself, and rightly so; Lord Frederick Verisopht, a poor duped idiot, brutalised with drink, whose wit consists in staring at men and sucking his cane; Lord Feenix, a sort of mechanism of parliamentary phrases, out of order, and hardly able to finish the ridiculous periods into which he always takes care to lapse; Mrs. Skewton, a hideous old ruin, a coquette to the last, demanding rose-coloured curtains for her death-bed, and parading her daughter through all the drawing-rooms of England, in order to sell her to some vain husband; Sir John Chester, a wretch of high society, who, for fear of compromising himself, refuses to save his natural son, and refuses it with all kinds of airs, as he finishes his chocolate. But the most complete and most English picture of the aristocratic spirit is the portrait of a London merchant, Mr. Dombey.

In France people do not look for types among the merchants, but they are found among that class in England, as forcible as in the proudest châteaux. Mr. Dombey loves his house as if he were a nobleman, as much as himself. If he neglects his daughter and longs for a son, it is to perpetuate the old name of his bank. He has his ancestors in commerce, and he would have his descendants. He maintains traditions, and continues a power. At this height of opulence, and with this scope of action, he is a prince, and with a prince's position he has his feelings. You see there a character which could only be produced in a country whose commerce embraces the globe, where merchants are potentates, where a company of merchants has speculated upon continents, maintained wars, destroyed kingdoms, founded an empire of a hundred million men. The pride of such a man is not petty, but terrible; it is so calm and high, that to find a parallel we must read again the *Mémoires* of Saint Simon. Mr. Dombey has always commanded, and it does not enter his mind that he could yield to any one or anything. He receives flattery as a tribute to which he had a right, and sees men beneath him, at a vast distance, as beings made to beseech and obey him. His second

[1] *Hard Times*, book. i. ch. ii.

wife, proud Edith Skewton, resists and scorns him; the pride of the merchant is pitted against the pride of the noble-born woman, and the restrained outbursts of this growing opposition reveal an intensity of passion, which souls thus born and bred alone could feel. Edith, to avenge herself, flees on the anniversary of her marriage, and gives herself the appearance of being an adulteress. It is then that the inflexible pride asserts itself in all its stiffness. He has driven out of the house his daughter, whom he believes the accomplice of his wife; he forbids the one or the other to be brought to his memory; he commands his sister and his friends to be silent; he receives guests with the same tone and the same coldness. Despairing in heart, eaten up by the insult, by the conscience of his failure, by the idea of public ridicule, he remains as firm, as haughty, as calm as ever. He launches out more recklessly in business, and is ruined; he is on the point of suicide. Hitherto all was well: the bronze column continued whole and unbroken; but the exigencies of public morality mar the idea of the book. His daughter arrives in the nick of time. She entreats him; he softens, she carries him away; he becomes the best of fathers, and spoils a fine novel.

III.

Let us look at some other personages. In contrast with these bad and factitious characters, produced by national institutions, you find good creatures such as nature made them; and first, children.

We have none in French literature. Racine's little Joas could only exist in a piece composed for the ladies' college of Saint Cyr; the little child speaks like a prince's son, with noble and acquired phrases, as if repeating his catechism. Now-a-days these portraits are only seen in France in New-year's books, written as models for good children. Dickens has painted his with special gratification; he did not think of edifying the public, and he has charmed it. All his children are of extreme sensibility; they love much, and they crave to be loved. To understand this gratification of the painter, and this choice of characters, we must think of their physical type. English children have a colour so fresh, a complexion so delicate, a skin so transparent, eyes so blue and pure, that they are like beautiful flowers. No wonder if a novelist loves them, lends to their soul a sensibility and innocence which shine forth from their looks, if he thinks that these frail and charming roses are crushed by the coarse hands which try to bend them. We must also imagine to ourselves the households in which they grow up. When at five o'clock the merchant and the clerk leave their office and their business, they return as quickly as possible to the pretty cottage, where their children have played all day on the lawn. The fireside by which they will pass the evening is a sanctuary, and domestic tenderness is the only poetry they need. A child deprived of these affections and this happiness will seem to be deprived of the air that we breathe, and the novelist will not find a

volume too much to explain its unhappiness. Dickens has recorded it in ten volumes, and at last he has written the history of *David Copperfield.* David is loved by his mother, and by an honest servant girl, Peggotty; he plays with her in the garden; he watches her sew; he reads to her the natural history of crocodiles; he fears the hens and geese, which strut in a menacing and ferocious manner in the yard; he is perfectly happy. His mother marries again, and all changes. The father-in-law, Mr. Murdstone, and his sister Jane, are harsh, methodic, and cold beings. Poor little David is every moment wounded by hard words. He dare not speak or move; he is afraid to kiss his mother; he feels himself weighed down, as by a leaden cloak, by the cold looks of the new master and mistress. He falls back on himself; mechanically studies the lessons assigned him; cannot learn them, so great is his dread of not knowing them. He is whipped, shut up with bread and water in a lonely room. He is terrified by night, and fears himself. He asks himself whether in fact he is not bad or wicked, and weeps. This incessant terror, hopeless and issueless, the spectacle of this wounded sensibility and stupefied intelligence, the long anxieties, the watches, the solitude of the poor imprisoned child, his passionate desire to kiss his mother or to weep on the breast of his nurse,—all this is sad to see. These children's griefs are as deep as the vexations of a man. It is the history of a frail plant, which was flourishing in a warm air, under a sweet sun, and which, suddenly transplanted to the snow, sheds its leaves and withers.

The common people are like the children, dependent, ill cultivated, akin to nature, and subject to oppression. That is to say, Dickens extols them. That is not new in France; the novels of Eugène Sue have given us more than one example, and the theme is as old as Rousseau; but in the hands of the English writer it has acquired a singular force. His heroes have admirable delicacy and devotion. They have nothing vulgar but their pronunciation; the rest is but nobility and generosity. You see a mountebank abandon his daughter, his only joy, for fear of harming her in any way. A young woman devotes herself to save the unworthy wife of a man who loves her, and whom she loves; the man dies; she continues, from pure self-sacrifice, to care for the degraded creature. A poor waggoner who thinks his wife unfaithful, loudly pronounces her innocent, and all his vengeance is to think only of loading her with tenderness and kindness. No one, according to Dickens, feels so strongly as they do the happiness of loving and being loved—the pure joys of domestic life. No one has so much compassion for those poor deformed and infirm creatures whom they so often bring into the world, and who seem only born to die. No one has a juster and more inflexible moral sense. I confess even that Dickens' heroes unfortunately resemble the indignant fathers of French melodramas. When old Peggotty learns that his niece is seduced, he sets off, stick in hand, and walks over France,

Germany, and Italy, to find her and bring her back to duty. But above all, they have an English sentiment, which fails in Frenchmen: they are Christians. It is not only women, as in France, who take refuge in the idea of another world; men turn also their thoughts towards it. In England, where there are so many sects, and every one chooses his own, each one believes in the religion he has made for himself; and this noble sentiment raises still higher the throne, upon which the uprightness of their resolution and the delicacy of their heart has placed them.

In reality, the novels of Dickens can all be reduced to one phrase, to wit: Be good, and love; there is genuine joy only in the emotions of the heart; sensibility is the whole man. Leave science to the wise, pride to the nobles, luxury to the rich, have compassion on humble wretchedness; the smallest and most despised being may in himself be worth as much as thousands of the powerful and the proud. Take care not to bruise the delicate souls which flourish in all conditions, under all costumes, in all ages. Believe that humanity, pity, forgiveness, are the finest things in man; believe that intimacy, expansion, tenderness, tears, are the finest things in the world. To live is nothing; to be powerful, learned, illustrious, is little; to be useful is not enough. He alone has lived and is a man who has wept at the remembrance of a benefit, given or received.

IV.

We do not believe that this contrast between the weak and the strong, or this outcry against society in favour of nature, are the caprice of an artist or the chance of the moment. When we penetrate deeply into the history of English genius, we find that its primitive foundation was impassioned sensibility, and that its natural expression was lyrical exaltation. Both were brought from Germany, and make up the literature existing before the Conquest. After an interval you find them again in the sixteenth century, when the French literature, introduced from Normandy, had passed away: they are the very soul of the nation. But the education of this soul was opposite to its genius; its history contradicted its nature; and its primitive inclination has clashed with all the great events which it has created or suffered. The chance of a victorious invasion and an imposed aristocracy, whilst establishing the enjoyment of political liberty, has impressed in the character habits of strife and pride. The chance of an insular position, the necessity of commerce, the abundant possession of the first materials for industry, have developed the practical faculties and the positive mind. The acquisition of these habits, faculties, and mind, added to the chance of an old hostility to Rome, and an old hatred against an oppressive church, has given birth to a proud and reasoning religion, replacing submission by independence, poetic theology by practical morality, and faith by discussion. Politics, business, and

religion, like three powerful machines, have created a new man above the old. Stern dignity, self-command, the need of domination, harshness in dominion, strict morality, without compromise or pity, a taste for figures and dry calculation, a dislike of facts not palpable and ideas not useful, ignorance of the invisible world, scorn of the weaknesses and tendernesses of the heart,—such are the dispositions which the stream of facts and the ascendency of institutions tend to confirm in their souls. But poetry and domestic life prove that they have only half succeeded. The old sensibility, oppressed and perverted, still lives and works. The poet subsists under the Puritan, the trader, the statesman. The social man has not destroyed the natural man. This frozen crust, this unsociable pride, this rigid attitude, often cover a good and tender being. It is the English mask of a German head; and when a talented writer, often a writer of genius, reaches the sensibility which is bruised or buried by education and national institutions, he moves his reader in the most inner depths, and becomes the master of all hearts.

CHAPTER II

The Novel continued—Thackeray.

I. Abundance and excellence of novels—Of manners in England—Superiority of Dickens and Thackeray—Comparison between them.

II. The satirist—His moral intentions—His moral dissertations.

III. Comparison of raillery in France and England—Difference of the two temperaments, tastes, and minds.

IV. Superiority of Thackeray in bitter and serious satire—Serious irony—Literary snobs—*Miss Blanche Amory*—Serious caricature—*Miss Hoggarty*.

V. Solidity and precision of this satirical conception—Resemblance of Thackeray and Swift—The duties of an ambassador.

VI. Misanthropy of Thackeray—Silliness of his heroines—Silliness of love—Inbred vice of human generosities and exaltations.

VII. His levelling tendencies—Default of characters and society in England—Aversions and preferences—The snob and the aristocrat—Portraits of the king, the great court noble, the county gentleman, the town gentleman—Advantages of this aristocratic institution—Exaggeration of the satire.

VIII. The artist—Idea of pure art—Wherein satire injures art—Wherein it diminishes the interest—Wherein it falsifies the characters—Comparison of Thackeray and Balzac—*Valérie Marneffe* and *Rebecca Sharp*.

IX. Attainment of pure art—Portrait of *Henry Esmond*—Historical talent of Thackeray—Conception of ideal man.

X. Literature is a definition of man—The definition according to Thackeray—Wherein it differs from the truth.

I.

THE novel of manners in England multiplies, and for this there are several reasons: first, it is born there, and every plant grows well in its own soil; secondly, it is an amusement: there is no music there as in Germany, or conversation as in France: and men who must think and feel find it a means of feeling and thinking. On the other hand, women take part in it with eagerness; amidst the nullity of gallantry and the coldness of religion, it gives scope for imagination and dreams. Finally, by its minute details and practical counsels, it opens up a career to the precise and moral mind. The critic thus is, as it were, swamped in this copiousness; he must select in order to grasp the whole, and confine himself to a few in order to embrace the whole.

In this crowd two men have appeared of a superior talent, original

and contrasted, popular on the same grounds, ministers to the same cause, moralists in comedy and drama, defenders of natural sentiments against social institutions; who, by the precision of their pictures, the depth of their observations, the succession and harshness of their attacks, have renewed, with other views and in another style, the old combative spirit of Swift and Fielding.

One, more ardent, more expansive, wholly given up to rapture, an impassioned painter of crude and dazzling pictures, a lyric prose-writer, omnipotent in laughter and tears, plunged into fantastic invention, painful sensibility, vehement buffoonery; and by the boldness of his style, the excess of his emotions, the grotesque familiarity of his caricatures, he has displayed all the forces and weaknesses of an artist, all the audacities, all the successes, and all the oddities of the imagination.

The other, more contained, more instructed and stronger, a lover of moral dissertations, a counsellor of the public, a sort of lay preacher, less bent on defending the poor, more bent on censuring man, has brought to the aid of satire a sustained common sense, a great knowledge of the heart, a consummate cleverness, a powerful reasoning, a treasure of meditated hatred, and has persecuted vice with all the weapons of reflection. By this contrast the one completes the other; and we may form an exact idea of the English taste, by adding the portrait of William Makepeace Thackeray to that of Charles Dickens.

§ 1.—The Satirist.

II.

No wonder if in England a novelist writes satires. A gloomy and reflective man is impelled to it by his character; he is still further impelled by the surrounding manners. He is not permitted to contemplate passions as poetic powers; he is bidden to appreciate them as moral qualities. His pictures become sentences; he is a counsellor rather than an observer, a judge rather than an artist. You see by what machinery Thackeray has changed novel into satire.

I open at random his three great works—*Pendennis*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Newcomes*. Every scene sets in relief a moral truth: the author desires that at every page we should find a judgment on vice and virtue; he has blamed or approved beforehand, and the dialogues or portraits are to him only means by which he adds our approbation to his approbation, our blame to his blame. He is giving us lessons; and under the sentiments which he describes, as under the events which he relates, we continually discover precepts of conduct and the intentions of the reformer.

On the first page of *Pendennis* you see the portait of an old Major, a man of the world, selfish and vain, seated comfortably in his club, at the table by the fire, and near the window, envied by surgeon Glowry, whom nobody invites, seeking in the records of aristocratic

entertainments for his own name, gloriously placed amongst those of illustrious guests. A family letter arrives. Naturally he puts it aside, and reads it carelessly after all the rest. He utters an exclamation of horror; his nephew wants to marry an actress. He has places booked in the coach (charging the sum which he disbursed for the seats to the account of the widow and the young scapegrace of whom he was guardian), and hastens to save the young fool. If there were a low marriage, what would become of his invitations? The manifest conclusion is: Let us not be selfish, or vain, or fond of good living, like the Major.

Chapter the second: Pendennis, father of the young man, was in his time an apothecary, but of good family, and grieving to be reduced to this trade. He comes into money; passes for a physician, marries the relative of a lord, tries to creep into high families. He boasts all his life of having been invited by Sir Pepin Ribstone to an entertainment. He buys an estate, tries to sink the apothecary, and shows off in the new glory of a landed proprietor. Each of these details is a concealed or evident sarcasm, which says to the reader: 'My good friend, remain the honest John Tomkins that you are; and for the love of your son and yourself, avoid taking the airs of a great nobleman.'

Old Pendennis dies. His son, the noble heir of the domain, 'Prince of Pendennis and Grand Duke of Fairoaks,' begins to reign over his mother, his cousin, and the servants. He sends wretched verses to the county papers, begins an epic poem, a tragedy in which sixteen persons die, a scathing history of the Jesuits, and defends church and king like a loyal Tory. He sighs after the ideal, wishes for an unknown maiden, and falls in love with an actress, a woman of thirty-two, who learns her parts mechanically, as ignorant and stupid as can be. Young folks, my dear friends, you are all affected, pretentious, dupes of yourselves and of others. Wait to judge the world until you have seen it, and do not think you are masters when you are scholars.

The instruction continues as long as the life of Arthur. Like Lesage in *Gil Blas*, and Balzac in *Le Père Goriot*, the author of *Pendennis* depicts a young man having some talent, endowed with good feelings, even generous, desiring to make a name, and falling in with the maxims of the world; but Lesage only wished to amuse us, and Balzac only wished to stir our passions: Thackeray, from beginning to end, works to correct us.

This intention becomes still more evident if we examine in detail one of his dialogues and one of his pictures. You will not find there the impartial energy, bent on copying nature, but the attentive thoughtfulness, bent on transforming into satire objects, words, and events. All the words of the character are chosen and weighed, so as to be odious or ridiculous. He accuses himself, is studious to display his vice, and under his voice we hear the voice of the writer who judges, unmasks, and punishes him. Miss Crawley, a rich old woman, falls

ill.[1] Mrs. Bute, her relative, hastens to save her, and to save the inheritance. Her aim is to have excluded from the will a nephew, Captain Rawdon, an old favourite, presumptive heir of the old lady. This Rawdon is a stupid guardsman, a frequenter of hotels, a too clever gambler, a duellist, and a *roué*. Fancy the capital opportunity for Mrs. Bute, the respectable mother of a family, the worthy spouse of a clergyman, accustomed to write her husband's sermons! From sheer virtue she hates Captain Rawdon, and will not suffer that such a good sum of money should fall into such bad hands. Moreover, are we not responsible for our families? and is it not for us to publish the faults of our relatives? It is our strict duty, and Mrs. Bute acquits herself of hers conscientiously. She provides edifying stories of her nephew, and therewith she edifies the aunt. He has ruined so and so; he has wronged such a woman. He has duped this tradesman; he has killed this husband. And above all, unworthy man, he has mocked his aunt. Will that generous lady continue to cherish such a viper? Will she suffer her numberless sacrifices to be repaid by this ingratitude and this ridicule? You can imagine the ecclesiastical eloquence of Mrs. Bute. Seated at the foot of the bed, she keeps the patient in sight, plies her with draughts, enlivens her with terrible sermons, and mounts guard at the door against the probable invasion of the heir. The siege was well conducted, the legacy attacked so obstinately must yield; the virtuous fingers of the matron grasped beforehand and by anticipation the substantial heap of shining sovereigns. And yet a carping spectator might have found some faults in her management. She managed rather too well. She forgot that a woman persecuted with sermons, handled like a bale of goods, regulated like a clock, might take a dislike to so harassing an authority. What is worse, she forgot that a timid old woman, confined in the house, overwhelmed with preachings, poisoned with pills, might die before having changed her will, and leave all, alas, to her scoundrelly nephew. Instructive and notable example! Mrs. Bute, the honour of her sex, the consoler of the sick, the counsellor of her family, having ruined her health to look after her beloved sister-in-law, and to preserve the inheritance, was just on the point, by her exemplary devotion, of putting the patient in her coffin, and the inheritance in the hands of her nephew.

Apothecary Clump arrives; he trembles for his dear client; she is worth to him two hundred a year; he is resolved to save this precious life, in spite of Mrs. Bute. Mrs. Bute interrupts him, and says:

'I am sure, my dear Mr. Clump, no efforts of mine have been wanting to restore our dear invalid, whom the ingratitude of her nephew has laid on the bed of sickness. I never shrink from personal discomfort; I never refuse to sacrifice

[1] *Vanity Fair*, [Unless the large octavo edition is mentioned, the translator has always used the collected edition of Thackeray's works, in small octavo, 1855–1868, 14 vols.]

myself. . . . I would lay down my life for my duty, or for any member of my husband's family.'[1]

The disinterested apothecary returns to the charge heroically. Immediately she replies in the finest strain; her eloquence flows from her lips as from an over-full pitcher. She cries aloud:

'Never, as long as nature supports me, will I desert the post of duty. As the mother of a family and the wife of an English clergyman, I humbly trust that my principles are good. When my poor James was in the smallpox, did I allow any hireling to nurse him? No!'

The patient Clump scatters about sugared compliments, and pressing his point amidst interruptions, protestations, offers of sacrifice, railings against the nephew, at last hits the mark. He delicately insinuates that the patient 'should have change, fresh air, gaiety.' 'The sight of her horrible nephew casually in the Park, where I am told the wretch drives with the brazen partner of his crimes,' Mrs. Bute said (letting the cat of selfishness out of the bag of secrecy), 'would cause her such a shock, that we should have to bring her back to bed again. She must not go out, Mr. Clump. She shall not go out as long as I remain to watch over her. And as for *my* health, what matters it? I give it cheerfully, sir. I sacrifice it at the altar of my duty.' It is clear that the author attacks Mrs. Bute and all legacy-hunters. He gives her ridiculous airs, pompous phrases, a transparent, gross, and blustering hypocrisy. The reader feels hatred and disgust for her the more she speaks. He would unmask her; he is pleased to see her assailed, driven in a corner, taken in by the polished manœuvres of her adversary, and rejoices with the author, who tears from her and emphasises the shameful confession of her folly and her greed.

Having arrived so far, satirical reflection quits the literary form. In order the better to develop itself, it exhibits itself alone. Thackeray comes in his proper character to attack vice. No author is more fertile in dissertations; he constantly enters his story to reprimand or instruct us; he adds theoretical to active morality. We might glean from his novels one or two volumes of essays in the manner of La Bruyère or of Addison. There are essays on love, on vanity, on hypocrisy, on meanness, on all the virtues, all the vices; and turning over a few pages, we shall find one on the comedies of legacies, and of too attentive relatives:

'What a dignity it gives an old lady, that balance at the banker's! How tenderly we look at her faults, if she is a relative (and may every reader have a score of such), what a kind, good-natured old creature we find her! How the junior partner of Hobbs and Dobbs leads her smiling to the carriage with the lozenge upon it, and the fat wheezy coachman! How, when she comes to pay us a visit, we generally find an opportunity to let our friends know her station in the world! We say (and with perfect truth) I wish I had Miss Mac Whirter's signature to a cheque for five thousand pounds. She wouldn't miss it, says your wife. She is my aunt, say you, in an easy careless way, when your friend asks if Miss

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xix.

Mac Whirter is any relative? Your wife is perpetually sending her little testimonies of affection; your little girls work endless worsted baskets, cushions, and foot-stools for her. What a good fire there is in her room when she comes to pay you a visit, although your wife laces her stays without one! The house during her stay assumes a festive, neat, warm, jovial, snug appearance not visible at other seasons. You yourself, dear sir, forget to go to sleep after dinner, and find yourself all of a sudden (though you invariably lose) very fond of a rubber. What good dinners you have—game every day, Malmsey-Madeira, and no end of fish from London! Even the servants in the kitchen share in the general prosperity; and, somehow, during the stay of Miss Mac Whirter's fat coachman, the beer is grown much stronger, and the consumption of tea and sugar in the nursery (where her maid takes her meals) is not regarded in the least. Is it so, or is it not so? I appeal to the middle classes. Ah, gracious powers! I wish you would send me an old aunt—a maiden aunt—an aunt with a lozenge on her carriage, and a front of light coffee-coloured hair—how my children should work workbags for her, and my Julia and I would make her comfortable! Sweet—sweet vision! Foolish—foolish dream!"[1]

There is no disguising it. The reader most resolved not to be warned, is warned. When we have an aunt with a good sum to leave, we shall value our attentions and our tenderness at their true worth. The author has taken the place of our conscience, and the novel, transformed by reflection, becomes a school of manners.

III.

The lash is laid on very heavily in this school; it is the English taste. About tastes and whips there is no disputing; but without disputing we may understand, and the surest means of understanding the English taste is to compare it with the French taste.

I see in France, in a drawing-room of men of wit, or in an artist's studio, a score of lively people: they must be amused, that is their character. You may speak to them of human wickedness, but on condition of diverting them. If you get angry, they will be shocked; if you teach a lesson, they will yawn. Laugh, it is the rule here—not cruelly, or from manifest enmity, but in good humour and in lightness of spirit. This nimble wit must act; for it the discovery of a clean piece of folly is a fortunate hap. As a light flame, it glides and flickers in sudden outbreaks on the mere surface of things. Satisfy it by imitation, and to please gay people be gay. Be polite, that is the second commandment, very like the other. You speak to sociable, delicate, vain men, whom you must take care not to offend, and flatter. You would wound them by trying to carry conviction by force, by dint of solid arguments, by a display of eloquence and indignation. Do them the honour of supposing that they understand you at the first word, that a hinted smile is to them as good as a syllogism established, that a fine allusion caught on the wing reaches them better than the

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. ix

heavy onset of a gross geometrical satire. Think, lastly (between ourselves), that, in politics as in religion, they have been for a thousand years very well governed, over governed; that when a man is bored he desires to be so no more; that a coat too tight splits at the elbows and elsewhere. They are critics from choice; from choice they like to insinuate forbidden things; and often, by abuse of logic, by transport, by vivacity, from ill humour, they strike at society through government, at morality through religion. They are scholars who have been too long under the rod; they break the windows in opening the doors. I dare not tell you to please them; I simply remark that, in order to please them, a grain of seditious humour will do no harm.

I cross seven leagues of sea, and here I am in a great unadorned hall, with a multitude of benches, with gas burners, swept, orderly, a debating club or a preaching house. There are five hundred long faces, gloomy and subdued;[1] and at the first glance it is clear that they are not there to amuse themselves. In this land a grosser mood, overcharged with a heavier and stronger nourishment, has deprived impressions of their flat mobility, and thought, less facile and prompt, has lost its vivacity and its gaiety. If you rail before them, think that you are speaking to attentive, concentrated men, capable of durable and profound sensations, incapable of changeable and sudden emotion. Those immobile and contracted faces will preserve the same attitude; they resist fleeting and half-formed smiles; they cannot unbend; and their laughter is a convulsion as stiff as their gravity. Do not skim over your subject, lay stress upon it; do not pass over it lightly, impress it; do not dally, but strike; reckon that you must vehemently move vehement passions, and that shocks are needed to set these nerves in motion. Reckon also that your hearers are practical minds, lovers of the useful; that they come here to be taught; that you owe them solid truths; that their common sense, somewhat contracted, does not fall in with hazardous extemporisations or doubtful hints; that they demand worked out refutations and complete explanations; and that if they have paid to come in, it was to hear advice which they might apply, and satire founded on proof. Their mood requires strong emotions; their mind asks for precise demonstrations. To satisfy their mood, you must not touch the surface, but torture vice; to satisfy their mind, you must not rail in sallies, but by arguments. One word more: down there, in the midst of the assembly, behold that gilded, splendid book, resting royally on a velvet cushion. It is the Bible; about it there are fifty moralists, who a while ago met at the theatre and pelted an actor off the stage with apples, who was guilty of having the wife of a townsman for his mistress. If with your finger-tip, with all the compliments and disguises in the world, you touch a single sacred leaf, or

[1] Thackeray, in his *Book of Snobs*, says: 'Their usual English expression of intense gloom and subdued agony.'

the least moral conventionalism, immediately fifty hands on your coat collar will put you out of the door. With Englishmen you must be English, with their passion and their common sense adopt their leading-strings. Thus confined to recognised truths, your satire will become more bitter, and will add the weight of public belief to the pressure of logic and the force of indignation.

IV.

No writer was better gifted than Thackeray for this kind of satire, because no faculty is more proper to satire than reflection. Reflection is a concentrated attention, and concentrated attention increases a hundredfold the force and duration of emotions. He who is immersed in the contemplation of a vice feels a hatred of vice, and the intensity of his hatred is measured by the intensity of his contemplation. At first anger is a generous wine, which intoxicates and exalts; when preserved and shut up, it becomes a liquor burning all that it touches, and corroding even the vessel which contains it. Of all satirists, Thackeray, after Swift, is the most gloomy. Even his countrymen have reproached him with depicting the world uglier than it is. Indignation, grief, scorn, disgust, are his ordinary sentiments. When he digresses, and imagines tender souls, he exaggerates their sensibility, in order to render their oppression more odious. The selfishness which wounds them appears horrible, and this resigned sweetness is a mortal insult to their tyrants: it is the same hatred which has calculated the kindliness of the victims and the harshness of the persecutors.

This anger, exasperated by reflection, is also armed by reflection. It is clear that the author is not carried away by passing indignation or pity. He has mastered himself before speaking. He has often weighed the rascality which he is about to describe. He is in possession of the motives, species, results, as a naturalist is of his classifications. He is sure of his judgment, and has matured it. He punishes like a man convinced, who has before him a heap of proofs, who advances nothing without a document or an argument, who has foreseen all objections and refuted all excuses, who will never pardon, who is right in being inflexible, who is conscious of his justice, and who rests his sentence and his vengeance on all the powers of meditation and equity. The effect of this justified and contained hatred is overwhelming. When we have read to the end of Balzac's novels, we feel the pleasure of a naturalist walking through a museum, past a fine collection of specimens and monstrosities. When we have read to the end of Thackeray, we feel the shudder of a stranger brought before a mattress in the operating-room of an hospital, on the day when moxas are applied or a limb is taken off.

In such a case the most natural weapon is serious irony, because it bears witness to a concentrated hate: he who employs it suppresses his first movement; he feigns to be speaking against himself, and con-

strains himself to take the part of his adversary. On the other hand, this painful and voluntary attitude is the sign of an excessive scorn; the apparent protection lent to his enemy is the worst of insults. The author seems to say: 'I am ashamed to attack you; you are so weak that, even supported, you must fall; your reasonings are your shame, and your excuses are your condemnation.' Thus the more serious the irony, the stronger it is; the more you take care to defend your adversary, the more you degrade him; the more you seem to aid him, the more you crush him. This is why Swift's grave sarcasm is so terrible; we think he is showing respect, and he slays; his approbation is a flagellation. Amongst Swift's pupils, Thackeray is the first. Several chapters in the *Book of Snobs*—that, for instance, on literary snobs—are worthy of *Gulliver*. The author has been passing in review all the snobs of England; what will he say of his colleagues, the literary snobs? Will he dare to speak of them? Certainly:

'My dear and excellent querist, whom does the Schoolmaster flog so resolutely as his own son? Didn't Brutus chop his offspring's head off? You have a very bad opinion indeed of the present state of Literature and of literary men, if you fancy that any one of us would hesitate to stick a knife into his neighbour penman, if the latter's death could do the State any service.

'But the fact is, that in the literary profession there are no Snobs. Look round at the whole body of British men of letters, and I defy you to point out among them a single instance of vulgarity, or envy, or assumption.

'Men and women, as far as I have known them, they are all modest in their demeanour, elegant in their manners, spotless in their lives, and honourable in their conduct to the world and to each other. You *may* occasionally, it is true, hear one literary man abusing his brother; but why? Not in the least out of malice; not at all from envy; merely from a sense of truth and public duty. Suppose, for instance, I good-naturedly point out a blemish in my friend *Mr. Punch's* person, and say *Mr. P.* has a hump-back, and his nose and chin are more crooked than those features in the Apollo or Antinous, which we are accustomed to consider as our standards of beauty; does this argue malice on my part towards *Mr. Punch?* Not in the least. It is the critic's duty to point out defects as well as merits, and he invariably does his duty with the utmost gentleness and candour. . . .

'That sense of equality and fraternity amongst Authors has always struck me as one of the most amiable characteristics of the class. It is because we know and respect each other, that the world respects us so much; that we hold such a good position in society, and demean ourselves so irreproachably when there.

'Literary persons are held in such esteem by the nation, that about two of them have been absolutely invited to Court during the present reign; and it is probable that towards the end of the season, one or two will be asked to dinner by Sir Robert Peel.

'They are such favourites with the public, that they are continually obliged to have their pictures taken and published; and one or two could be pointed out, of whom the nation insists upon having a fresh portrait every year. Nothing can be more gratifying than this proof of the affectionate regard which the people has for its instructors.

'Literature is held in such honour in England, that there is a sum of near

twelve hundred pounds per annum set apart to pension deserving persons following that profession. And a great compliment this is, too, to the professors, and a proof of their generally prosperous and flourishing condition. They are generally so rich and thrifty, that scarcely any money is wanted to help them.'[1]

We are tempted to make a mistake; and to comprehend this passage, we must remember that, in an aristocratical and monarchical society, amidst money-worship and adoration of rank, poor and vulgar talent is treated as its vulgarity and poverty deserve.[2] What makes these ironies yet stronger, is their length; some are prolonged during a whole tale, like the *Fatal Boots*. A Frenchman could not keep up a sarcasm so long. It would escape right or left through various emotions; it would change countenance, and would not preserve so fixed an attitude—the mark of such a decided animosity, so calculated and bitter. There are characters which Thackeray develops through three volumes—Blanche Amory, Rebecca Sharp—and of whom he never speaks but with insult; both are base, and he never introduces them without plying them with tendernesses: dear Rebecca! tender Blanche! The tender Blanche is a sentimental and literary young creature, obliged to live with her parents, who do not understand her. She suffers so much, that she ridicules them aloud before everybody: she is so oppressed by the folly of her mother and father-in-law, that she never omits an opportunity of making them feel their folly. In good conscience, could she do otherwise? Would it not be on her part a lack of sincerity to affect a gaiety which she has not, or a respect which she cannot feel? We understand that the poor child is in need of sympathy. When she gave up her dolls, this loving heart became first enamoured of Trenmor, a high-souled convict, the fiery Sténio, Prince Djalma, and other heroes of French novels. Alas! the imaginary world is not sufficient for wounded souls, and the craving for the ideal, for satiety, falls at last to worldly beings. At eleven years of age Miss Blanche had felt tender emotions towards a little Savoyard, an organ-grinder at Paris, whom she persisted in believing to be a prince carried off from his parents; at twelve an old and hideous drawing-master had agitated her young heart; at Madame de Caramel's boarding-school a correspondence by letter took place with two young pupils of the college of Charlemagne. Dear forlorn girl, her delicate feet are already wounded by the briars in her path of life; every day her illusions shed their leaves, and in vain she confides them to verse, in a little book bound in blue velvet, with a clasp of gold, entitled *Mes Larmes*. In this isolation, what is she to do? She grows enthusiastic over the young ladies whom she meets, feels a magnetic attraction at sight of them, becomes their sister, except that she casts

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. xvi.; *On Literary Snobs*.

[2] Stendhal says: 'L'Esprit et le génie perdent vingt-cinq pour cent de leur valeur en abordant en Angleterre.'

them aside to-morrow like an old dress: we cannot command our feelings, and nothing is more beautiful than the natural. Moreover, as the amiable child has much taste, a lively imagination, a poetic inclination for change, she keeps her maid Pincott at work day and night. Like a delicate person, a genuine dilettante and lover of the beautiful, she scolds her for her heavy eyes and her pale face:

'Our muse, with the candour which distinguished her, never failed to remind her attendant of the real state of matters. "I should send you away, Pincott, for you are a great deal too weak, and your eyes are failing you, and you are always crying and snivelling, and wanting the doctor; but I wish that your parents at home should be supported, and I go on enduring for their sake, mind," the dear Blanche would say to her timid little attendant. Or, "Pincott, your wretched appearance and slavish manner, and red eyes, positively give me the migraine; and I think I shall make you wear rouge, so that you may look a little cheerful;" or, "Pincott, I can't bear, even for the sake of your starving parents, that you should tear my hair out of my head in that manner; and I will thank you to write to them and say that I dispense with your services."'[1]

This fool of a Pincott does not appreciate her good fortune. Can one be sad in serving such a superior being as Miss Blanche? What joy to furnish her with subjects for her style! because, to confess the truth, Miss Blanche has not disdained to write 'some very pretty verses about the lonely little tiring-maid, whose heart was far away,' 'sad exile in a foreign land.' Alas! the slightest event suffices to wound this too sensitive heart. At the least emotion her tears flow, her feelings are shaken, like a delicate butterfly, crushed as soon as touched. There she goes, aerial, her eyes fixed on heaven, a faint smile lingering round her rosy lips, a touching fairy, so consoling to all who surround her, that every one wishes her at the bottom of a well.

One step added to serious irony leads us to serious caricature. Here, as before, the author pleads the rights of his neighbour; the only difference is, that he pleads them with too much warmth; it is insult upon insult. Under this head it abounds in Thackeray. Some of his grotesques are outrageous: for instance, M. Alcide de Mirobolant, a French cook, an artist in sauces, who declares his passion to Miss Blanche through the medium of symbolic dishes, and thinks himself a gentleman; Mrs. Major O'Dowd, a sort of female grenadier, the most pompous and bragging of Irishwomen, bent on ruling the regiment, and marrying the bachelors will they nill they; Miss Briggs, an old companion, born to receive insults, to make phrases and shed tears; the Doctor, who proves to his scholars who write bad Greek, that habitual idleness and bad construing lead to the gallows. These calculated deformities only excite a sad smile. We always perceive behind the oddity of the character the sardonic air of the painter, and we conclude that

[1] These remarks are only to be found in the original octavo edition of *Pendennis*.—TR.

the human race is base and stupid. Other figures, less exaggerated, are not more natural. We see that the author throws them expressly into palpable follies and marked contradictions. Such is Miss Crawley, an old immoral woman and free-thinker, who praises unequal marriages, and falls into a fit when on the next page her nephew makes one; who calls Rebecca Sharp her equal, and at the same time bids her 'put some coals on the fire;' who, on learning the departure of her favourite, cries with despair, 'Gracious goodness, and who's to make my chocolate?' These are comedy scenes, and not pictures of manners. There are twenty such. You see an excellent aunt, Mrs. Hoggarty, of Castle Hoggarty, settling down in the house of her nephew Titmarsh, throw him into vast expenses, persecute his wife, drive away his friends, make his marriage unhappy. The poor ruined fellow is thrown into prison. She denounces him to the creditors with genuine indignation, and reproaches him with perfect sincerity. The wretch has been his aunt's executioner; she has been dragged by him from her home, tyrannised over by him, robbed by him, outraged by his wife. She writes:

'I have seen butter wasted as if it had been dirt, cole flung away, candles burned at both ends; . . . and now you have the audassaty, being placed in prison justly for your crimes, for cheating me of £3000. . . . You come upon me to pay your detts! No, sir, it is quite enough that your mother should go on the parish, and that your wife should sweep the streets, to which you have indeed brought them; *I*, at least . . . have some of the comforts to which my rank entitles me. The furnitur in this house is mine; and as I presume you intend *your lady* to sleep in the streets, I give you warning that I shall remove it all to-morrow. Mr. Smithers will tell you that I had intended to leave you my intire fortune. I have this morning, in his presents, solamly toar up my will, and hereby renounce all connection with you and your beggarly family. *P.S.*—I took a viper into my bosom, *and it stung me.*'[1]

This just and compassionate woman finds her match, a pious man, John Brough, Esquire, M.P., director of the Independent West Diddlesex Fire and Life Insurance Company. This virtuous Christian has sniffed from afar the cheering odour of her lands, houses, stocks, and other landed and personal property. He pounces upon the fine property of Mrs. Hoggarty, is sorry to see that it only brings that lady four per cent., and resolves to double her income. He calls upon her at her lodgings, when her face was shockingly swelled and bitten by—never mind what:

'"Gracious heavens!" shouted John Brough, Esquire, "a lady of your rank to suffer in this way!—the excellent relative of my dear boy, Titmarsh! Never, madam—never let it be said that Mrs. Hoggarty of Castle Hoggarty should be subject to such horrible humiliation, while John Brough has a home to offer her,—a humble, happy Christian home, madam, though unlike, perhaps, the splendour to which you have been accustomed in the course of your distinguished career. Isabella, my love!—Belinda! speak to Mrs. Hoggarty. Tell her that John Brough's house is hers from garret to cellar. I repeat it, madam, from garret to

[1] *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. xi

cellar. I desire—I insist—I order, that Mrs. Hoggarty of Castle Hoggarty's trunks should be placed this instant in my carriage!"'[1]

This style raises a laugh, if you will, but a sad laugh. We have just learned that man is a hypocrite, unjust, tyrannical, blind. In our vexation we turn to the author, and we see on his lips only sarcasms, on his brow only chagrin.

V.

Let us look carefully; perhaps in less grave matters we shall find subject of genuine laughter. Let us consider, not a rascality, but a misadventure; rascality revolts, a misadventure might amuse. But amusement alone is not here; even in a diversion the satire retains its force, because reflection retains its intensity. There is in English fun a seriousness, an effort, an application that is marvellous, and their comicalities are composed with as much science as their sermons. The powerful attention decomposes its object in all its parts, and reproduces it with illusive detail and relief. Swift describes the land of speaking horses, the politics of Lilliput, the inventors of the Flying Island, with details as precise and harmonious as an experienced traveller, an exact inquirer into manners and countries. Thus supported, the impossible monster and the literary grotesque enter upon actual existence, and the phantom of the imagination takes the consistency of objects which we touch. Thackeray introduces this imperturbable gravity, this solid conception, this talent for illusion, into his farce. Study one of his moral essays; he wishes to prove that in the world we must conform to received customs, and transforms this commonplace into an Oriental anecdote. Reckon up the details of manners, geography, chronology, cookery, the mathematical designation of every object, person, and gesture, the lucidity of imagination, the profusion of local truths; you will understand why his raillery produces so original and biting an impression, and you will find here the same degree of studiousness and the same attentive energy as in the foregoing ironies and exaggerations: his enjoyment is as reflective as his hatred; he has changed his attitude, not his faculty:

'I am naturally averse to egotism, and hate self-laudation consumedly; but I can't help relating here a circumstance illustrative of the point in question, in which I must think I acted with considerable prudence.

'Being at Constantinople a few years since—(on a delicate mission)—the Russians were playing a double game, between ourselves, and it became necessary on our part to employ an *extra negotiator*—Leckerbiss Pasha of Roumelia, then Chief Galeongee of the Porte, gave a diplomatic banquet at his summer palace at Bujukdere. I was on the left of the Galeongee; and the Russian agent Count de Diddloff on his dexter side. Diddloff is a dandy who would die of a rose in aromatic pain: he had tried to have me assassinated three times in the course of the negotiation: but of course we were friends in public, and saluted each other in the most cordial and charming manner.

[1] *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. ix

'The Galeongee is—or was, alas! for a bow-string has done for him—a staunch supporter of the old school of Turkish politics. We dined with our fingers, and had flaps of bread for plates; the only innovation he admitted was the use of European liquors, in which he indulged with great gusto. He was an enormous eater. Amongst the dishes a very large one was placed before him of a lamb dressed in its wool, stuffed with prunes, garlic, assafœtida, capsicums, and other condiments, the most abominable mixture that ever mortal smelt or tasted. The Galeongee ate of this hugely; and pursuing the Eastern fashion, insisted on helping his friends right and left, and when he came to a particularly spicy morsel, would push it with his own hands into his guests' very mouths.

'I never shall forget the look of poor Diddloff, when his Excellency, rolling up a large quantity of this into a ball, and exclaiming, "Buk Buk" (it is very good), administered the horrible bolus to Diddloff. The Russian's eyes rolled dreadfully as he received it: he swallowed it with a grimace that I thought must precede a convulsion, and seizing a bottle next him, which he thought was Sauterne, but which turned out to be French brandy, he drank off nearly a pint before he knew his error. It finished him; he was carried away from the dining-room almost dead, and laid out to cool in a summer-house on the Bosphorus.

'When it came to my turn, I took down the condiment with a smile, said "Bismillah," licked my lips with easy gratification, and when the next dish was served, made up a ball myself so dexterously, and popped it down the old Galeongee's mouth with so much grace, that his heart was won. Russia was put out of Court at once, *and the treaty* of Kabobanople *was signed*. As for Diddloff, all was over with *him*, he was recalled to St. Petersburg, and Sir Roderick Murchison saw him, under the No. 3967, working in the Ural mines.[1]

The anecdote is evidently authentic; and when De Foe related the apparition of Mrs. Veal, he did not better imitate the style of an authenticated account.

VI.

So attentive a reflection is a source of sadness. To amuse ourselves with human passions, we must consider them as inquisitive men, like shifting puppets, or as learned men, like regulated wheels, or as artists, like powerful springs. If you only consider them as virtuous or vicious, your lost illusions will enchain you in gloomy thoughts, and you will find in man only weakness and ugliness. This is why Thackeray depreciates our whole nature. He does as a novelist what Hobbes does as a philosopher. Almost everywhere, when he describes fine sentiments, he derives them from an ugly source. Tenderness, kindness, love, are in his characters the effect of the nerves, of instinct, or of a moral disease. Amelia Sedley, his favourite, and one of his masterpieces, is a poor little woman, snivelling, incapable of reflection and decision, blind, a superstitious adorer of a coarse and selfish husband, always sacrificed by her own will and fault, whose love is made up of folly and weakness, often unjust, accustomed to see falsely, and more worthy of compassion than respect. Lady Castlewood, so good and tender, is enamoured, like Amelia, of a drunken and imbecile boor; and

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. i.; *The Snob playfully dealt with.*

her wild jealousy, exasperated on the slightest suspicion, implacable against her husband, giving utterance violently to cruel words, shows that her love comes not from virtue, but from mood. Helen Pendennis, the model of mothers, is a somewhat silly country prude, of narrow education, also jealous, and having in her jealousy all the harshness of Puritanism and passion. She faints on learning that her son has a mistress: it is 'such a sin, such a dreadful sin. I can't bear to think that my boy should commit such a crime. I wish he had died, almost, before he had done it.'[1] Whenever she is spoken to of little Fanny, 'the widow's countenance, always soft and gentle, assumed a cruel and inexorable expression.'[2] Meeting Fanny at the bedside of the sick young man, she drives her away as if she were a prostitute and a servant. Maternal love, in her as in the others, is an incurable blindness: her son is her idol; in her adoration she finds the means of making his lot insupportable, and himself unhappy. As to the love of the men for the women, if we judge from the pictures of the author, we can but feel pity for it, and look on it as ridiculous. At a certain age, according to Thackeray, nature speaks: we meet some woman; a fool or not, good or bad, we adore her; it is a fever. At the age of six months dogs have their disease; man has his at twenty. If a man loves, it is not because the lady is loveable, but because he must love. Do you think one would drink if not thirsty, or eat if not hungry?

He relates the history of this hunger and thirst with a bitter vigour. He seems like a man grown sober, railing at drunkenness. He explains at length, in a half sarcastic tone, the folly of Major Dobbin for Amelia; how the Major buys bad wines from her father; how he urges the postilions, rouses the servants, persecutes his friends, to see Amelia more quickly; how, after ten years of sacrifices, tenderness, and services, he sees that he is held second to an old portrait of a faithless, coarse, selfish, and dead husband. The saddest of these accounts is that of the first love of Pendennis—Miss Fotheringay, the actress, whom he loves, a matter-of-fact person, a good housekeeper, who has the mind and the education of a kitchen-maid. She speaks to the young man of the fine weather, and the pie she has just been making: Pendennis discovers in these two phrases a wonderful depth of intellect and a superhuman majesty of devotion. He asks Miss Fotheringay, who has just been playing Ophelia, if the latter loved Hamlet. Miss Fotheringay answers:

'"In love with such a little ojous wretch as that stunted manager of a Bingley?' She bristled with indignation at the thought. Pen explained it was not of her he spoke, but of Ophelia of the play. "Oh, indeed; if no offence was meant, none was taken: but as for Bingley, indeed, she did not value him—not that glass of punch." Pen next tried her on Kotzebue. "Kotzebue? who was he?" "The author of the play in which she had been performing so admirably." "She did not know that—the man's name at the beginning of the book was Thompson," she said. Pen laughed at her adorable simplicity. Pendennis, Pendennis—how she

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. liv. [2] *Ibid.* ch. lii.

spoke the words! Emily, Emily! how good, how noble, how beautiful, how perfect she is!'[1]

The first volume runs wholly upon this contrast; it seems as though Thackeray said to his reader: 'My dear brothers in humanity, we are rascals forty-nine days in fifty; in the fiftieth, if we escape pride, vanity, wickedness, selfishness, it is because we fall into a hot fever our folly causes our devotion.'

VII.

Yet, short of being Swift, one must love something; one cannot always be wounding and destroying; and the heart, wearied of scorn and hate, needs repose in praise and emotion. Moreover, to blame a fault is to laud the contrary quality; and a man cannot sacrifice a victim without raising an altar: it is circumstance which fixes on the one, and which builds the other; and the moralist who combats the dominant vice of his country and his age, preaches the virtue contrary to the vice of his age and his country. In an aristocratical and commercial society, this vice is selfishness and pride! Thackeray will therefore extol sweetness and tenderness. Let love and kindness be blind, instinctive, unreasoning, ridiculous, it matters little: such as they are, he adores them; and there is no more singular contrast than that of his heroes and of his admiration. He creates foolish women, and kneels before them; the artist within him contradicts the commentator: the first is ironical, the second laudatory; the first represents the pettiness of love, the second writes its panegyric; the top of the page is a satire in action, the bottom is a dithyramb in periods. The compliments which he lavishes on Amelia Sedley, Helen Pendennis, Laura, are infinite; no author ever more visibly and incessantly paid court to his women; he sacrifices men to them, not once, but a hundred times:

'Very likely female pelicans like so to bleed under the selfish little beaks of their young ones: it is certain that women do. There must be some sort of pleasure which we men don't understand, which accompanies the pain of being scarified.[2] . . . Do not let us men despise these instincts because we cannot feel them. These women were made for our comfort and delectation, gentlemen,—with all the rest of the minor animals.[3] . . . Be it for a reckless husband, a dissipated son, a darling scapegrace of a brother, how ready their hearts are to pour out their best treasures for the benefit of the cherished person; and what a deal of this sort of enjoyment are we, on our side, ready to give the soft creatures! There is scarce a man that reads this, but has administered pleasure in that fashion to his womankind, and has treated them to the luxury of forgiving him.'[4]

When he enters the room of a good mother, or of a young honest girl,

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. v.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xxi. This passage is only found in the large octavo edition.—Tr.

[3] *Ibid.* ch. xxi.

[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxi., large octavo edition. These words are not in the small octavo edition.—Tr.

he casts down his eyes as on the threshold of a sanctuary. In the presence of Laura resigned, pious, he checks himself:

'And as that duty was performed quite noiselessly—while the supplications which endowed her with the requisite strength for fulfilling it, also took place in her own chamber, away from all mortal sight,—we, too, must be perforce silent about these virtues of hers, which no more bear public talking about than a flower will bear to bloom in a ball-room.'[1]

Like Dickens, he has a reverence for the family, tender and simple sentiments, calm and pure contentments, such as are relished by the fireside between a child and a wife. When this misanthrope, so reflective and harsh, lights upon a filial effusion or a maternal grief, he is wounded in a sensitive place, and, like Dickens, he makes us weep.[2]

We have enemies because we have friends, and aversions because we have preferences. If we prefer devoted kindliness and tender affections, we dislike arrogance and harshness: the cause of love is also the cause of hate; and sarcasm, like sympathy, is the criticism of a social form and a public vice. This is why Thackeray's novels are a war against aristocracy. Like Rousseau, he praised simple and affectionate manners; like Rousseau, he hates the distinction of ranks.

He wrote a whole book on this, a sort of moral and half political pamphlet, the *Book of Snobs*. The word does not exist in France, because they have not the thing. The snob is a child of aristocratical societies: perched on his step of the long ladder, he respects the man on the step above him, and despises the man on the step below, without inquiring what they are worth, solely on account of their position; in his innermost heart he finds it natural to kiss the boots of the first, and to kick the second. Thackeray reckons up at length the degrees of this habit. Hear his conclusion:

'I can bear it no longer—this diabolical invention of gentility, which kills natural kindliness and honest friendship. Proper pride, indeed! Rank and precedence, forsooth! The table of ranks and degrees is a lie and should be flung into the fire. Organise rank and precedence! that was well for the masters of ceremonies of former ages. Come forward, some great marshal, and organise Equality in society.'

Then he adds, with common sense, altogether English bitterness and familiarity:

'If ever our cousins the Smigsmags asked me to meet Lord Longears, I would like to take an opportunity after dinner, and say, in the most good-natured way in the world:—Sir, Fortune makes you a present of a number of thousand pounds every year. The ineffable wisdom of our ancestors has placed you as a chief and hereditary legislator over me. Our admirable Constitution (the pride of Britons and envy of surrounding nations) obliges me to receive you as my senator, superior,

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. li.

[2] See, for example, in the *Great Hoggarty Diamond*, the death of the little child. The *Book of Snobs* ends thus: 'Fun is good, Truth is still better, and Love best of all.'

and guardian. Your eldest son, Fitz-Heehaw, is sure of a place in Parliament; your younger sons, the De Brays, will kindly condescend to be post-captains and lieutenant-colonels, and to represent us in foreign courts, or to take a good living when it falls convenient. These prizes our admirable Constitution (the pride and envy of, etc.) pronounces to be your due; without count of your dulness, your vices, your selfishness; of your entire incapacity and folly. Dull as you may be (and we have as good a right to assume that my lord is an ass, as the other proposition, that he is an enlightened patriot);—dull, I say, as you may be, no one will accuse you of such monstrous folly, as to suppose that you are indifferent to the good luck which you possess, or have any inclination to part with it. No—and patriots as we are, under happier circumstances, Smith and I, I have no doubt, were we dukes ourselves, would stand by our order.

'We would submit good-naturedly to sit in a high place. We would acquiesce in that admirable Constitution (pride and envy of, etc.) which made us chiefs and the world our inferiors; we would not cavil particularly at that notion of hereditary superiority which brought so many simple people cringing to our knees. May be we would rally round the Corn-Laws; we would make a stand against the Reform Bill; we would die rather than repeal the acts against Catholics and Dissenters; we would, by our noble system of class-legislation, bring Ireland to its present admirable condition.

'But Smith and I are not Earls as yet. We don't believe that it is for the interest of Smith's army, that young De Bray should be a Colonel at five-and-twenty, of Smith's diplomatic relations, that Lord Longears should go ambassador to Constantinople,—of our politics, that Longears should put his hereditary foot into them.

'This booing and cringing Smith believes to be the act of Snobs; and he will do all in his might and main to be a Snob, and to submit to Snobs no longer. To Longears he says, "We can't help seeing, Longears, that we are as good as you. We can spell even better; we can think quite as rightly; we will not have you for our master, or black your shoes any more."'[1]

This opinion of politics only continues the remarks of the moralist. If he hates aristocracy, it is less because it oppresses man than because it corrupts him; in deforming social life, it deforms private life; in establishing injustice, it establishes vice; after having forestalled the common weal, it poisons the soul; and Thackeray finds its trace in the perversity and foolishness of all classes and all sentiments.

The king opens this list of vengeful portraits. It is George IV., 'the first gentleman in Europe.' This great monarch, so justly regretted, could cut out a coat, drive a four-in-hand nearly as well as the Brighton coachman, and play the fiddle well. 'In the vigour of youth and the prime force of his invention, he invented Maraschino punch, a shoe-buckle, and a Chinese pavilion, the most hideous building in the world:'

'Two boys had leave from their loyal masters to go from Slaughter House School where they were educated, and to appear on Drury Lane stage, amongst a crowd which assembled there to greet the king. THE KING? There he was. Beef-eaters were before the august box: the Marquis of Steyne (Lord of the Powder Closet) and other great officers of state were behind the chair on which he

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, last chapter.

sate, *He* sate—florid of face, portly of person, covered with orders, and in a rich curling head of hair—How we sang God save him! How the house rocked and shouted with that magnificent music. How they cheered, and cried, and waved handkerchiefs. Ladies wept: mothers clasped their children: some fainted with emotion. . . . Yes, we saw him. Fate cannot deprive us of *that*. Others have seen Napoleon. Some few still exist who have beheld Frederick the Great, Doctor Johnson, Marie Antoinette, etc.—be it our reasonable boast to our children, that we saw George the Good, the Magnificent, the Great.'[1]

Dear prince! the virtue emanating from his heroic throne spread through the hearts of all his courtiers. Whoever presented a better example than the Marquis of Steyne? This lord, a king in his own sphere, tried to prove that he was so. He forces his wife to sit at table beside women without any character, his mistresses. Like a true prince, he had for his special enemy his eldest son, presumptive heir to the marquisate, whom he leaves to starve, and compels to run into debt. He is now making love to a charming person, Mrs. Rebecca Crawley, whom he loves for her hypocrisy, coolness, and unequalled insensibility. The Marquis, by dint of debasing and oppressing all who surround him, ends by hating and despising men; he has no taste for anything but perfect rascalities. Rebecca rouses him; one day even she transports him with enthusiasm. She plays Clytemnestra in a charade, and her husband Agamemnon; she advances to the bed, a dagger in her hand; her eyes are lighted up with a smile so ghastly, that people quake as they look at her; Brava! brava! old Steyne's strident voice was heard roaring over all the rest, 'By ——, she'd do it too!' One can hear that he has the true conjugal feeling. His conversation is remarkably frank. 'I can't send Briggs away,' Becky said.—'You owe her her wages, I suppose,' said the peer.—'Worse than that, I have ruined her.'—'Ruined her? then why don't you turn her out?'

He is, moreover, an accomplished gentleman, of fascinating sweetness; he treats his women like a pacha, and his words are like blows. I commend to the reader the domestic scene in which he gives the order to invite Mrs. Crawley. Lady Gaunt, his daughter-in-law, says that she will not be present at dinner, and will go home. His lordship answered:

'I wish you would, and stay there. You will find the bailiffs at Bareacres very pleasant company, and I shall be freed from lending money to your relations, and from your own damned tragedy airs. Who are you to give orders here? You have no money. You've got no brains. You were here to have children, and you have not had any. Gaunt's tired of you; and George's wife is the only person in the family who doesn't wish you were dead. Gaunt would marry again if you were. . . . You, forsooth, must give yourself airs of virtue. . . . Pray, madame, shall I tell you some little anecdotes about my Lady Bareacres, your mamma?'[2]

The rest is in the same style. His daughters-in-law, driven to despair

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xlviii. This passage is only found in the original octavo edition.—TR.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xlix.

say they wish they were dead. This declaration rejoices him, and he concludes with these words: 'This Temple of Virtue belongs to me. And if I invite all Newgate or all Bedlam here, by —, they shall be welcome' The habit of despotism makes despots, and the best means of implanting despots in families, is to preserve nobles in the State.

Let us take rest in the contemplation of the country gentleman. The innocence of the fields, hereditary respect, family traditions, the pursuit of agriculture, the exercise of local magistracy, must have produced these upright and sensible men, full of kindness and probity, protectors of their county, and servants of their country. Sir Pitt Crawley is a model; he has four thousand a year and two parliamentary boroughs. It is true that these are rotten boroughs, and that he sells the second for fifteen hundred a year. He is an excellent economist, and shears his farmers so close that he can only find bankrupt-tenants. A coach proprietor, a government contractor, a mine proprietor, he pays his subordinates so badly, and is so niggard in outlay, that his mines 'are filled with water; and as for his coach-horses, every mail proprietor in the kingdom knew that he lost more horses than any man in the country;' the Government flung his contract of damaged beef upon his hands. A popular man, he always prefers the society of a horse-dealer to the company of a gentleman. 'He was fond of drink, of swearing, of joking with the farmers' daughters; . . . would cut his joke and drink his glass with a tenant, and sell him up the next day; or have his laugh with the poacher he was transporting with equal good humour.' He speaks with a country accent, has the mind of a lackey, the habits of a boor. At table, waited on by three men and a butler, on massive silver, he inquires into the dishes, and the beasts which have furnished them. 'What *ship* was it, Horrocks, and when did you kill?' 'One of the black-faced Scotch, Sir Pitt: we killed on Thursday.' 'Who took any?' 'Steel of Mudbury took the saddle and two legs, Sir Pitt; but he says the last was too young and confounded woolly, Sir Pitt.' 'What became of the shoulders?' The dialogue goes on in the same tone; after the Scotch mutton comes the black Kentish pig: these animals might be Sir Pitt's family, so much is he interested in them. As for his daughters, he lets them stray to the gardener's cottage, where they pick up their education. As for his wife, he beats her from time to time. As for his people, he exacts the last farthing of the money they owe him. 'A farthing a day is seven shillings a year; seven shillings a year is the interest of seven guineas. Take care of your farthings, old Tinker, and your guineas will come quite nat'ral.' 'He never gave away a farthing in his life,' growled Tinker. 'Never, and never will: it's against my principle.' He is impudent, brutal, coarse, stingy, shrewd, extravagant; but is courted by ministers, and a high-sheriff; honoured, powerful, he rolls in a gilded carriage, and is one of the pillars of the State.

These are the rich; probably money has corrupted them. Let us

look for a poor aristocrat, free from temptations; his lofty soul, left to itself, will display all its native beauty. Sir Francis Clavering is in this case. He has played, drunk, and supped until he has nothing more left Transactions at the gambling table had speedily effected his ruin; he had been forced to sell out; had shown the white feather, and after frequenting all the billiard-rooms in Europe, been thrown into prison by his uncourteous creditors. To get out he has married a good Indian widow, who outrages spelling, and whose money was left her by her father, a disreputable old lawyer and indigo-smuggler. Clavering ruins her, goes on his knees to obtain gold and pardon, swears on the Bible to contract no more debts, and when he goes out runs straight to the money-lender. Of all the rascals that novelists have ever exhibited, he is the basest. He has neither resolution nor common sense; he is simply a man in a state of dissolution. He swallows insults like water, weeps, begs pardon, and begins again. He debases himself, prostrates himself, and the next moment swears and storms, to fall back into the depths of the extremest cowardice. He implores, threatens, and in the same quarter of an hour accepts the threatened man as his intimate confidant and friend:

'Now, ain't it hard that she won't trust me with a single tea-spoon; ain't it ungentlemanlike, Altamont? You know my lady's of low birth—that is—I beg your pardon—hem—that is, it's most cruel of her not to show more confidence in me. And the very servants begin to laugh—the dam scoundrels! . . . They don't answer my bell; and—and my man was at Vauxhall last night with one of my dress shirts and my velvet waistcoat on, I know it was mine—the confounded impudent blackguard!—and he went on dancing before my eyes, confound him! I'm sure he'll live to be hanged—he deserves to be hanged—all those infernal rascals of valets!'[1]

His conversation is a compound of oaths, whines, and ravings; he is not a man, but a wreck of a man: there survive in him but the discordant remains of vile passions, like the fragments of a crushed snake, which, unable to bite, bruise themselves and wriggle about in their slaver and mud. The sight of a bank-note makes him launch blindly into a mass of entreaties and lies. The future has disappeared for him; he sees but the present. He will sign a bill for twenty pounds at three months to get a sovereign. His brutishness has become imbecility; his eyes are shut; he does not see that his protestations excite mistrust, that his lies excite disgust, that by his very baseness he loses the fruit of his baseness; so that when he comes in, one feels a violent inclination to take the honourable baronet, the member of parliament, the proud inhabitant of a historic house, by the neck, and pitch him, like a basket of rubbish, from the top of the stairs to the bottom.

We must stop. A volume would not exhaust the list of perfections which Thackeray discovers in the English aristocracy. The Marquis

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. ix.

of Farintosh, twenty-fifth of his name, an illustrious fool, healthy and self-contented, whom all the women ogle and all the men bow to; Lady Kew, an old woman of the world, tyrannical and corrupted, at enmity with her daughter, and a match-maker; Sir Barnes Newcome, one of the most cowardly of men, the wickedest, the falsest, the best abused and beaten who has ever smiled in a drawing-room or spoken in Parliament. I see only one estimable character, and he is indistinct—Lord Kew, who, after many follies and excesses, is touched by his Puritan old mother, and repents. But these portraits are sweet compared to the dissertations; the commentator is still more bitter than the artist; he wounds more in speaking than in making his personages speak. You must read his biting diatribes against marriages of convenience, and the sacrifice of girls; against the inequality of inheritance and the envy of younger sons; against the education of the nobles, and their traditionary insolence; against the purchase of commissions in the army, the isolation of classes, the outrages on nature and family, invented by society and law. Behind this, philosophy shows a second gallery of portraits as insulting as the first: for inequality, having corrupted the great men whom it exalts, corrupts the small men whom it degrades; and the spectacle of envy or baseness in the small, is as ugly as that of insolence or despotism in the great. According to Thackeray, English society is a compound of flatteries and intrigues, each striving to hoist himself up a step higher on the social ladder and to push back those who are climbing. To be received at court, to see one's name in the papers amongst a list of illustrious guests, to give a cup of tea at home to some stupid and bloated peer; such is the supreme limit of human ambition and felicity. For one master there are always a hundred lackeys. Major Pendennis, a resolute man, cool and clever, has contracted this leprosy. His happiness to-day is to bow to a lord. He is only at peace in a drawing-room, or in a park of the aristocracy. He craves to be treated with that humiliating condescension wherewith the great overwhelm their inferiors. He pockets lack of attention with ease, and dines graciously at a noble board, where he is invited twice in three years to stop a gap. He leaves a man of genius or a witty woman to converse with a titled sheep or a tipsy lord. He prefers being tolerated at a Marquess' to being respected at a commoner's. Having exalted these fine dispositions into principles, he inculcates them on his nephew, whom he loves, and to push him on in the world, offers him in marriage a basely acquired fortune and the daughter of a convict. Others glide through the proud drawing-rooms, not with parasitic manners, but on account of their splendid balance at the banker's. Once upon a time in France, the nobles with the money of citizens manured their estates; now in England the citizens, by a noble marriage, ennoble their money. For a hundred thousand pounds to the father, Pump, the merchant, marries Lady Blanche Stiff-neck, who, though married, remains my Lady. Naturally he is scorned by her, as a tradesman, and moreover, hated for having made her half a

woman of the people. He dare not see his friends at home; they are too vulgar for his wife. He dare not visit the friends of his wife; they are too high for him. He is his wife's butler, the butt of his father-in-law, the servant of his son, and consoles himself by thinking that his grandsons, when they become Lord Pump, will blush for him and never mention his name.[1] A third means of entering the aristocracy is to ruin oneself, and never see any one. This ingenious method is employed by Mrs. Major Ponto in the country. She has an incompatible governess for her daughters, who thinks that Dante is called Alighieri because he was born at Algiers, but who has educated two marchionesses and a countess.

'Some one wondered we were not enlivened by the appearance of some of the neighbours.—We can't in our position of life, we can't well associate with the attorney's family, as I leave you to suppose—and the Doctor—one may ask one's medical man to one's table, certainly: but his family.—The people in that large red house just outside of the town.—What! the *château-calicot*. That purse-proud ex-linendraper—The parson—Oh! he used to preach in a surplice. He is a Puseyite!'

This sensible Ponto family yawns in solitude for six months, and the rest of the year enjoys the gluttony of the country-squires whom they regale, and the rebuffs of the great lords whom they visit. The son, an officer of the hussars, requires to be kept in luxury so as to be on an equality with his noble comrades, and his tailor receives above three hundred a year out of the nine hundred which make up the whole family income.[2] I should never end, if I recounted all the villanies and miseries which Thackeray attributes to the aristocratic spirit, the division of families, the pride of the ennobled sister, the jealousy of the sister who preserves her condition, the degradation of the characters trained up from school to reverence the little lords, the abasement of the daughters who strive to compass noble marriages, the rage of snubbed vanity, the meanness of the attentions offered, the triumph of folly, the scorn of talent, the consecrated injustice, the heart rendered unnatural, the morals perverted. Before this striking picture of truth and genius, we need remember that this injurious inequality is the cause of a wholesome liberty, that social injustice produces political welfare, that a class of hereditary nobles is a class of hereditary statesmen, that in a century and a half England has had a hundred and fifty years of good government, that in a century and a half France has had a hundred and fifty years of bad government, that all is compensated, and that it is possible to pay dearly for capable leaders, a connected policy, free elections, and the control of the Government by the nation. We must also remember that this talent, founded on intense reflection, concentrated in moral prejudices, could not but have transformed the picture of manners into a systematic

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. viii.; *Great City Snobs.*

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi.; *On Some Country Snobs.*

and combative satire, exasperate satire into calculated and implacable animosity, blacken human nature, and become enraged, with studied, redoubled, and natural hatred, against the chief vice of his country and of his time.

§ 2.—The Artist.

VIII.

In literature as well as in politics, we cannot have everything. Talents, like happiness, do not always follow suit. Whatever constitution it selects, a people is always half unhappy; whatever genius he has, a writer is always half impotent. We cannot preserve at once more than a single attitude. To transform the novel is to deform it: he who, like Thackeray, gives to the novel satire for its object, ceases to give it art for its rule, and all the force of the satirist is the weakness of the novelist.

What is a novelist? In my opinion he is a psychologist, who naturally and involuntarily sets psychology at work; he is nothing else, nor more. He loves to picture feelings, to perceive their connections, their precedents, their consequences; and he indulges in this pleasure. In his eyes they are forces, having various directions and magnitudes. About their justice or injustice he troubles himself little. He introduces them in characters, conceives the dominant quality, perceives the traces which this leaves on the others, marks the contrary or harmonious influences of the temperament, of education, of occupation, and labours to manifest the invisible world of inward inclinations and dispositions by the visible world of outward words and actions. To this is his labour reduced. Whatever these bents are, he cares little. A genuine painter sees with pleasure a well-drawn arm and vigorous muscles, even if they be employed in slaying a man. A genuine novelist enjoys the contemplation of the greatness of a harmful sentiment, or the organised mechanism of a pernicious character. He has sympathy with talent, because it is the only faculty which exactly copies nature: occupied in experiencing the emotions of his personages, he only dreams of marking their vigour, kind and mutual action. He represents them to us as they are, whole, not blaming, not punishing, not mutilating; he transfers them to us intact and separate, and leaves to us the right of judging if we desire it. His whole effort is to make them visible, to unravel the types darkened and altered by the accidents and imperfections of real life, to set in relief wide human passions, to be shaken by the greatness of the beings whom he animates, to raise us out of ourselves by the force of his creations. We recognise art in this creative power, impartial and universal as nature, freer and more potent than nature, taking up the rough-drawn or disfigured work of its rival in order to correct its faults and give effect to its conceptions.

All is changed by the intervention of satire; and to begin with

the part of the author. When in pure novel he speaks in his own name, it is to explain a sentiment or mark the cause of a faculty; in satirical novel it is to give us moral advice. It has been seen to how many lessons Thackeray subjects us. That they are good ones no one disputes; but at least they take the place of useful explanations. A third of the volume, being occupied by warnings, is lost to art. Summoned to reflect on our faults, we know the character less. The author designedly neglects a hundred delicate shades which he might have discovered and shown to us. The character, less complete, is less lifelike; the interest, less concentrated, is less lively. Turned away from him instead of brought back to him, our eyes wander and forget him; instead of being absorbed, we are absent in mind. More, and worse, we end by experiencing some degree of weariness. We judge these sermons true, but repeated till we are sick of them. We fancy ourselves listening to college lectures, or handbooks for the use of young priests. We find the like things in gilt books, with pictured covers, given as Christmas presents to children. Are you much rejoiced to learn that marriages of convenience have their inconveniency, that in the absence of a friend we readily speak evil of him, that a son often afflicts his mother by his irregularities, that selfishness is an ugly fault? All this is true; but it is too true. We come to listen to a man in order to hear new things. These old moralities, though useful and well spoken, smack of the paid pedant, so common in England, the clergyman in the white tie, standing bolt upright in his room, and droning for three hundred a year, daily admonition to the young gentlemen whom parents have sent to his educational hothouse.

This studied presence of a moral intention spoils the novel as well as the novelist. It must be confessed, a volume of Thackeray has the cruel misfortune of recalling the novels of Miss Edgeworth or the stories of Canon Schmidt. Here is one which shows us Pendennis proud, extravagant, hare-brained, lazy, shamefully plucked for his examinations; whilst his companions, less intellectual but more studious, took high places in honours, or passed with decent credit. This edifying contrast does not warn us; we do not wish to go back to school; we shut the book, and recommend it like medicine, to our little cousin. Other puerilities, less shocking, end in wearying us just as much. We do not like the prolonged contrast between good Colonel Newcome and his wicked relatives. This Colonel gives money and cakes to every child, money and shawls to all his cousins, money and kind words to all the servants; and these people only answer him with coldness and coarseness. It is clear, from the first page, that the author would persuade us to be affable, and we kick against the too matter-of-course invitation; we don't want to be scolded in a novel; we are in a bad humour with this invasion of pedagogy. We wanted to go to the theatre; we have been taken in by the outside bill, and we growl, *sotto voce*, to find ourselves at a sermon.

Let us console ourselves: the characters suffer as much as we; the author spoils them in preaching to us; they, like us, are sacrificed to satire. He does not animate beings, he lets puppets act. He only combines their actions to make them ridiculous, odious, or disappointing. After a few scenes we recognise the spring, and thenceforth we are always foreseeing when it is going to act. This foresight deprives the character of half its truth, and the reader of half his illusion. Perfect fooleries, complete mischances, unmitigated wickednesses, are rare things. The events and feelings of real life are not so arranged as to make such calculated contrasts and such clever combinations. Nature does not invent these dramatic effects: we soon see that we are before the foot-lights, in front of bedizened actors, whose words are written for them, and their gestures arranged.

To picture exactly this alteration of truth and art, we must compare two characters step by step. There is a personage, unanimously recognised as Thackeray's masterpiece, Becky Sharp, an intrigante and a bad character, but a superior and well-mannered woman. Let us compare her to a similar personage of Balzac, in *les Parents pauvres*, Valérie Marneffe. The difference of the two works will exhibit the difference of the two literatures. As the English excel as moralists and satirists, so the French excel as artists and novelists.

Balzac loves his Valérie; this is why he explains and magnifies her. He does not labour to make her odious, but intelligible. He gives her the education of a prostitute, a 'husband as depraved as a prison full of galley-slaves,' luxurious habits, recklessness, prodigality, womanly nerves, a pretty woman's disgust, an artist's rapture. Thus born and bred, her corruption is natural. She needs elegance as one needs air. She takes it no matter whence, remorselessly, as we drink water from the first stream. She is not worse than her profession; she has all its innate and acquired excuses, of mood, tradition, circumstance, necessity; she has all its powers, *abandon*, graces, mad gaiety, alternatives of triviality and elegance, unmeditated audacity, comical devices, magnificence and success. She is perfect of her kind, like a proud and dangerous horse, which we admire while we fear it. Balzac delights to paint her with no other aim but his picture. He dresses her, lays on for her her patches, arranges her dresses, trembles before her dancing-girl's motions. He details her gestures with as much pleasure and truth as if he were her waiting-woman. His artistic curiosity is fed on the least traits of character and manners. After a violent scene, he pauses at a spare moment, and shows her idle, stretched on her couch like a cat, yawning and basking in the sun. Like a physiologist, he knows that the nerves of the beast of prey are softened, and that it only ceases to bound in order to sleep. But what bounds! She dazzles, fascinates; she defends herself successively against three proved accusations, refutes evidence, alternately humiliates and glorifies herself, rails, adores, demonstrates, changing a score of times her tones,

ideas, tricks, in the same quarter of an hour. An old shopkeeper, protected against emotions by trade and avarice, trembles at her speech: 'She sets her feet on my heart, crushes me, stuns me. Ah, what a woman! When she looks cold at me, it is worse than a stomach-ache. . . . How she tripped down the steps, making them bright with her looks!' Everywhere passion, force, atrocity, conceal the ugliness and corruption. Attacked in her fortune by an honest woman, she gets up an incomparable comedy, played with a great poet's eloquence and exaltation, and broken suddenly by the coarse burst of laughter and triviality of a porter's daughter on the stage. Style and action are raised to the height of an epic. 'When the words "Hulot and two hundred thousand francs" were mentioned, Valérie gave a passing look from between her two long eyelids, like the glare of a cannon through its smoke.' A little further, caught in the act by one of her lovers, a Brazilian, and quite capable of killing her, she blenched for an instant; but recovering the same moment, she checked her tears. 'She came to him, and looked so fiercely that her eyes glittered like daggers.' Danger roused and inspired her, and her excited nerves propel genius and courage to her brain. To complete the picture of this impetuous nature, superior and unstable, Balzac at the last moment makes her repent. To proportion her fortune to her vice, he leads her triumphantly through the ruin, death, or despair of twenty people, and shatters her in the supreme moment by a fall as terrible as her success.

Before such passion and logic, what is Becky Sharp? A calculating plotter, cool in temperament, full of common sense, a former governess, having parsimonious habits, a genuine man of business, always proper, always active, unsexed, void of the voluptuous softness and diabolical transport which can give brilliancy to her character and charm to her profession. She is not a prostitute, but a petticoated and heartless barrister. Nothing is more fit to inspire aversion. The author loses no opportunity of expressing his own; for three volumes he pursues her with sarcasms and misfortunes; he puts only false words, perfidious actions, revolting sentiments, in her mouth. From her coming on the stage, at the age of seventeen, treated with rare kindness by a noble family, she lies from morning to night, and by coarse expedients tries to fish there for a husband. The better to crush her, Thackeray himself sets forth all these basenesses, lies, and indecencies. Rebecca ever so gently pressed the hand of fat Joseph:

'It was an advance, and as such, perhaps, some ladies of indisputable correctness and gentility will condemn the action as immodest; but, you see, poor dear Rebecca had all this work to do for herself. If a person is too poor to keep a servant, though ever so elegant, he must sweep his own rooms: if a dear girl has no dear mamma to settle matters with the young man, she must do it for herself.'[1]

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. iv.

A governess at Sir Pitt Crawley's, she gains the friendship of her pupils by reading the tales of Crébillon the younger, and of Voltaire, with them. She writes to her friend Amelia:

'The rector's wife paid me a score of compliments about the progress my pupils made, and thought, no doubt, to touch my heart—poor, simple, country soul! as if I cared a fig about my pupils.'[1]

This phrase is an imprudence hardly natural in so careful a person, and the author adds it to her part, to make it odious. A little further Rebecca is grossly adulatory and mean to old Miss Crawley; and her pompous periods, manifestly false, instead of exciting admiration, raise disgust. She is selfish and lying to her husband, and, knowing that he is on the field of battle, busies herself only in getting together a little purse. Thackeray designedly dwells on the contrast: the heavy dragoon 'went through the various items of his little catalogue of effects, striving to see how they might be turned into money for his wife's benefit, in case any accident should befall him.' 'Faithful to his plan of economy, the captain dressed himself in his oldest and shabbiest uniform' to get killed in:

'And this famous dandy of Windsor and Hyde Park went off on his campaign . . . with something like a prayer on the lips for the woman he was leaving. He took her up from the ground, and held her in his arms for a minute, tight pressed against his strong beating heart. His face was purple and his eyes dim, as he put her down and left her. . . . And Rebecca, as we have said, wisely determined not to give way to unavailing sentimentality on her husband's departure. . . . "What a fright I seem," she said, examining herself in the glass, "and how pale this pink makes one look." So she divested herself of this pink raiment; . . . then she put her bouquet of the ball into a glass of water, and went to bed, and slept very comfortably.'[2]

From these examples judge of the rest. Thackeray's whole business is to degrade Rebecca Sharp. He convicts her of harshness to her son, theft from her tradesmen, imposture against everybody To finish, he makes her a dupe; whatever she does, it comes to nothing. Compromised by the advances which she has lavished on foolish Joseph, she momentarily expects an offer of marriage. A letter comes, announcing that he has gone to Scotland, and presents his compliments to Miss Rebecca. Three months later, she secretly marries Captain Rawdon, a poor dolt. Sir Pitt Crawley, Rawdon's father, throws himself at her feet, with four thousand a year, and offers her his hand. In her consternation she weeps despairingly. 'Married, married, married already!' is her cry; and it is enough to pierce sensitive souls. Later, she tries to win her sister-in-law by passing for a good mother. 'Why do you kiss me here?' asks her son; 'you never kiss me at home.' The consequence is, complete discredit; once more she is lost. The Marquis of Steyne, her lover, presents her to society, loads her

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xi. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xxx.

with jewels, bank-notes, and has her husband appointed to some island in the East. The husband enters at the wrong moment, knocks my lord down, restores the diamonds, and drives her away. Wandering on the Continent, she tries five or six times to grow rich and appear honest. Always, at the moment of success, accident brings her to the ground. Thackeray sports with her, as a child with a cockchafer, letting her hoist herself painfully to the top of the ladder, in order to pluck her down by the foot and make her tumble disgracefully. He ends by dragging her through taverns and greenrooms, and pointing his finger at her from a distance, as a gamester, a drunkard, is unwilling to touch her further. On the last page he installs her vulgarly in a fortune, plundered by doubtful devices, and leaves her in bad odour, uselessly hypocritical, abandoned to the shadiest society. Under this storm of irony and contempt, the heroine is dwarfed, illusion is weakened, interest diminished, art attenuated, poetry disappears, and the character, more useful, has become less true and beautiful.

IX.

Suppose that a happy chance lays aside these causes of weakness, and keeps open these sources of talent. Amongst all these transformed novels will appear a single genuine one, elevated, touching, simple, original, the history of Henry Esmond. Thackeray has not written a less popular nor a more beautiful story.

This book comprises the fictitious memoirs of Colonel Esmond, a contemporary of Queen Anne, who, after a troubled life in Europe, retired with his wife to Virginia, and became a planter there. Esmond speaks; and the necessity of adapting the tone to the character suppresses the satirical style, the reiterated irony, the sanguinary sarcasm, the scenes contrived to ridicule folly, the events combined to crush vice. Thenceforth we enter the real world; we let illusion guide us, we rejoice in a varied spectacle, easily unfolded, without moral intention. You are no more harassed by personal advice; you remain in your place, calm, sure, no actor's finger pointed at you to warn you at an interesting moment that the piece is played on your account, and to do you good. At the same time, and unconsciously, you are at ease. Quitting bitter satire, pure narration charms you; you take rest from hating. You are like an army surgeon, who, after a day of fights and manœuvres, sits on a hillock and beholds the motion in the camp, the procession of carriages, and the distant horizon softened by the sombre tints of evening.

On the other hand, the long reflections, which seem vulgar and dislocated under the pen of the writer, become natural and connected in the mouth of the character. Esmond is an old man, writing for his children, and remarking upon his experience. He has a right to judge life; his maxims are suitable to his years: having passed into sketches of manners, they lose their pedantic air; we hear them complacently,

and perceive, as we turn the page, the calm and sad smile which has dictated them.

With the reflections we endure the details. Elsewhere, the minute descriptions appear frequently puerile; we blamed the author for dwelling, with the scrupulosity of an English painter, on school adventures, coach scenes, inn episodes; we thought that this intense studiousness, unable to sympathise with lofty themes of art, was compelled to stoop to microscopical observations and photographic details. Here all is changed. A writer of memoirs has a right to record his infantine impressions. His distant recollections, mutilated remnants of a forgotten life, have a peculiar charm; we accompany him back to infancy. A Latin lesson, a soldiers' march, a ride behind some one, become important events embellished by distance; we enjoy his peaceful and familiar pleasure, and feel with him a vast sweetness in seeing once more, with so much ease and in so clear a light, the well-known phantoms of the past. Minute detail adds to the interest in adding to the naturalness. Stories of campaign life, scattered opinions on the books and events of the time, a hundred petty scenes, a thousand petty facts, manifestly useless, are on that very account illusory. We forget the author, we listen to the old Colonel, we find ourselves carried back a hundred years, and we have the extreme pleasure, so uncommon, of believing in what we read.

Whilst the subject obviates the faults, or turns them into virtues, it offers for these virtues the very finest theme. The powerful reflection has decomposed and reproduced the manners of the time with a most astonishing fidelity. Thackeray knows Swift, Steele, Addison, St. John, Marlborough, as well as the most attentive and learned historian. He depicts their habits, household converse, like Walter Scott himself; and, what Walter Scott could not do, he imitates their style so that we are deceived by it; and many of their authentic phrases, inwoven with the text, cannot be distinguished from it. This perfect imitation is not limited to a few select scenes; it comprises the whole volume. Colonel Esmond writes as people wrote in the year 1700. The trick, I was going to say the genius, is as great as the effort and success of Paul Louis Courier, in imitating the style of ancient Greece. The style of Esmond has the calmness, the exactness, the simplicity, the solidity of the classics. Our modern temerities, our prodigal imagery, our jostled figures, our habit of gesticulation, our striving for effect, all our bad literary customs, have disappeared. Thackeray must have gone back to the primitive sense of words, discovered their forgotten shades of meaning, recomposed an outworn state of intellect and a lost species of ideas, to make his copy approach so closely to the original. The imagination of Dickens himself would have failed in this. To attempt and accomplish it, then, were needed all the sagacity, calm, and force of knowledge and meditation.

But the masterpiece of the work is the character of Esmond

Thackeray has endowed him with that tender kindliness, almost feminine, which he everywhere extols above all other human virtues, and that self mastery which is the effect of habitual reflection. These are the finest qualities of his psychological armoury; each by its contrast increases the value of the other. We see a hero, but original and new, English in his cool resolution, modern by the delicacy and sensibility of his heart.

Henry Esmond is a poor child, the supposed bastard of Lord Castlewood, and brought up by the inheritors of his name. In the first chapter we are touched by the modulated and noble emotion which we retain to the end of the volume. Lady Castlewood, on her first visit to the castle, comes to him in the 'book-room or yellow-gallery;' being informed by the housekeeper who the little boy is, she blushes and walked back; the next instant, touched by remorse, she returns:

'With a look of infinite pity and tenderness in her eyes, she took his hand again, placing her other fair hand on his head, and saying some words to him, which were so kind and said in a voice so sweet, that the boy, who had never looked upon so much beauty before, felt as if the touch of a superior being or angel smote him down to the ground, and kissed the fair protecting hand as he knelt on one knee. To the very last hour of his life, Esmond remembered the lady as she then spoke and looked, the rings on her fair hands, the very scent of her robe, the beam of her eyes lighting up with surprise and kindness, her lips blooming in a smile, the sun making a golden halo round her hair.[1] . . . There seemed, as the boy thought, in every look or gesture of this fair creature, an angelical softness and bright pity—in motion or repose she seemed gracious alike; the tone of her voice, though she uttered words ever so trivial, gave him a pleasure that amounted almost to anguish. It cannot be called love, that a lad of twelve years of age, little more than a menial, felt for an exalted lady, his mistress: but it was worship.'[2]

This noble and pure feeling is expanded by a succession of devoted actions, related with extreme simplicity; in the least words, in the turn of a phrase, in a chance conversation, we perceive a great heart, passionately grateful, never tiring of inventing benefits or services, sympathising, friendly, giving advice, defending the honour of the family and the welfare of the children. Twice Esmond interposed between Lord Castlewood and Mohun the duellist; it was not his fault that the murderer's weapon did not reach his own breast. When Lord Castlewood on his deathbed revealed that he was not a bastard, that the title and fortune were his, he burned without a word the confession which would have rescued him from the poverty and humiliation in which he had so long pined. Outraged by his mistress, sick of a wound received by his master's side, accused of ingratitude and cowardice, he persisted in his silence with the justification in his hand:

'And when the struggle was over in Harry's mind, a glow of righteous happiness filled it; and it was with grateful tears in his eyes that he returned thanks to God for that decision which he had been enabled to make.'[3]

[1] *The History of Henry Esmond*, bk. i. ch. i.

[2] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. vii.

[3] *Ibid.* bk. ii. ch. i

Later, being in love with another, sure not to marry her if his birth remained under a cloud in the eyes of the world, absolved by his benefactress, whose son he had saved, entreated by her to resume the name which belonged to him, he smiled sweetly, and gravely replied:

'"It was settled twelve years since, by my dear lord's bedside," says Colonel Esmond. "The children must know nothing of this. Frank and his heirs after him must bear our name. 'Tis his rightfully; I have not even a proof of that marriage of my father and mother, though my poor lord, on his deathbed, told me that Father Holt had brought such a proof to Castlewood. I would not seek it when I was abroad. I went and looked at my poor mother's grave in her convent. What matter to her now? No court of law on earth, upon my mere word, would deprive my Lord Viscount and set me up. I am the head of the house, dear lady; but Frank is Viscount of Castlewood still. And rather than disturb him, I would turn monk, or disappear in America."

'As he spoke so to his dearest mistress, for whom he would have been willing to give up his life, or to make any sacrifice any day, the fond creature flung herself down on her knees before him, and kissed both his hands in an outbreak of passionate love and gratitude, such as could not but melt his heart, and make him feel very proud and thankful that God had given him the power to show his love for her, and to prove it by some little sacrifice on his own part. To be able to bestow benefits or happiness on those one loves is sure the greatest blessing conferred upon a man—and what wealth or name, or gratification of ambition or vanity, could compare with the pleasure Esmond now had of being able to confer some kindness upon his best and dearest friends?

'"Dearest saint," says he, "purest soul, that has had so much to suffer, that has blest the poor lonely orphan with such a treasure of love. 'Tis for me to kneel, not for you: 'tis for me to be thankful that I can make you happy. Hath my life any other aim? Blessed be God that I can serve you!"'[1]

These noble tendernesses seem still more touching when contrasted with the surrounding circumstances. Esmond goes to the wars, serves a party, lives amidst dangers and business, judging revolutions and politics from a lofty point of view; he becomes a man of experience, well informed, learned, provident, capable of great enterprises, possessing prudence and courage, harassed by his own thoughts and griefs, ever sad and ever strong. He ends by accompanying to England the Pretender, half-brother of Queen Anne, and keeps him disguised at Castlewood, awaiting the moment when the queen, dying and won over to the cause, should declare him her heir. This young prince, a Stuart, pays court to Lord Castlewood's daughter Beatrix, whom Esmond loves, and gets out at night to join her. Esmond, who waits for him, sees the crown lost and his house dishonoured. His insulted honour and outraged love break forth in a superb and terrible rage. Pale, with set teeth, his brain fired by four nights of anxieties and watches, he preserves his clear mind, his restrained tone, and explains to the prince with perfect etiquette, with the respectful coldness of an official messenger, the folly which the prince has committed, and the villany which the prince has

[1] *The History of Henry Esmond*, bk. iii. ch. ii.

contemplated. The scene must be read to see how much superiority and passion this calmness and bitterness imply:

'"What mean you, my lord?" says the Prince, and muttered something about a *guet-à-pens*, which Esmond caught up.

'"The snare, Sir," said he, "was not of our laying; it is not we that invited you. We came to avenge, and not to compass, the dishonour of our family."

'"Dishonour! *Morbleu!* there has been no dishonour," says the Prince, turning scarlet, "only a little harmless playing."

'"That was meant to end seriously."

'"I swear," the Prince broke out impetuously, "upon the honour of a gentleman, my lords"—

'"That we arrived in time. No wrong hath been done, Frank," says Colonel Esmond, turning round to young Castlewood, who stood at the door as the talk was going on. "See! here is a paper whereon his Majesty hath deigned to commence some verses in honour, or dishonour, of Beatrix. Here is 'Madame' and 'Flamme,' 'Cruelle' and 'Rebelle,' and 'Amour' and 'Jour,' in the Royal writing and spelling. Had the Gracious lover been happy, he had not passed his time in sighing." In fact, and actually as he was speaking, Esmond cast his eyes down towards the table, and saw a paper on which my young Prince had been scrawling a madrigal, that was to finish his charmer on the morrow.

'"Sir," says the Prince, burning with rage (he had assumed his Royal coat unassisted by this time), "did I come here to receive insults?"

'"To confer them, may it please your Majesty," says the Colonel, with a very low bow, "and the gentlemen of our family are come to thank you."

'"*Malédiction!*" says the young man, tears starting into his eyes with helpless rage and mortification. "What will you with me, gentlemen?"

"If your Majesty will please to enter the next apartment," says Esmond, preserving his grave tone, "I have some papers there which I would gladly submit to you, and by your permission I will lead the way;" and taking the taper up, and backing before the Prince with very great ceremony, Mr. Esmond passed into the little Chaplain's room, through which we had just entered into the house:—"Please to set a chair for his Majesty, Frank," says the Colonel to his companion, who wondered almost as much at this scene, and was as much puzzled by it, as the other actor in it. Then going to the crypt over the mantel-piece, the Colonel opened it, and drew thence the papers which so long had lain there.

'"Here, may it please your Majesty," says he, "is the Patent of Marquis sent over by your Royal Father at St. Germain's to Viscount Castlewood, my father: here is the witnessed certificate of my father's marriage to my mother, and of my birth and christening; I was christened of that religion of which your sainted sire gave all through life so shining example. These are my titles, dear Frank, and this what I do with them: here go Baptism and Marriage, and here the Marquisate and the August Sign-Manual, with which your predecessor was pleased to honour our race." And as Esmond spoke he set the papers burning in the brazier. "You will please, sir, to remember," he continued, "that our family hath ruined itself by fidelity to yours; that my grandfather spent his estate, and gave his blood and his son to die for your service; that my dear lord's grandfather (for lord you are now, Frank, by right and title too) died for the same cause; that my poor kinswoman, my father's second wife, after giving away her honour to your wicked perjured race, sent all her wealth to the King, and got in return that precious title that lies in ashes, and this inestimable yard of blue riband. I lay this at your feet, and stamp upon it: I draw this sword, and break it and deny you; and had

you completed the wrong you designed us, by Heaven I would have driven it through your heart, and no more pardoned you than your father pardoned Monmouth."'[1]

Two pages later he speaks thus of his marriage to Lady Castlewood:

'That happiness, which hath subsequently crowned it, cannot be written in words; 'tis of its nature sacred and secret, and not to be spoken of, though the heart be ever so full of thankfulness, save to Heaven and the One ear alone—to one fond being, the truest and tenderest and purest wife ever man was blessed with. As I think of the immense happiness which was in store for me, and of the depth and intensity of that love which, for so many years, hath blessed me, I own to a transport of wonder and gratitude for such a boon—nay, am thankful to have been endowed with a heart capable of feeling and knowing the immense beauty and value of the gift which God hath bestowed upon me. Sure, love *vincit omnia*, is immeasurably above all ambition, more precious than wealth, more noble than name. He knows not life who knows not that: he hath not felt the highest faculty of the soul who hath not enjoyed it. In the name of my wife I write the completion of hope, and the summit of happiness. To have such a love is the one blessing, in comparison of which all earthly joy is of no value; and to think of her, is to praise God.'

A character capable of such contrasts is a lofty work; it is to be remembered that Thackeray has produced no other; we regret that moral intentions have perverted these fine literary faculties; and we deplore that satire has robbed art of such a talent.

X.

Who is he; and what is the value of this literature of which he is one of the princes? At bottom, like every literature, it is a definition of man; and to judge it, we must compare it with man. We can do so now; we have just studied a mind, Thackeray himself; we have considered his faculties, their connections, results, their different degrees; we have under our eyes a model of human nature. We have a right to judge of the copy by the model, and to shape the definition which his romances lay down by the definition which his character furnishes.

The two definitions are contrary, and his portrait is a criticism on his talent. We have seen that in him the same faculties produce the beautiful and the ugly, force and weakness, success and failure; that moral reflection, after having provided him with every satirical power, debases him in art; that, after having spread through his contemporary novels a tone of vulgarity and falseness, it raises his historical novel to the level of the finest productions; that the same constitution of mind teaches him the sarcastic and violent, as well as the modulated and simple style, the bitterness and harshness of hate with the effusions and delicacies of love. The evil and the good, the beautiful and the ugly, the repulsive and the agreeable, are then in him but remoter effects, of slight importance, born of changing circumstances, derived

[1] *The History of Henry Esmond*, bk. iii. ch. xiii.

and fortuitous qualities, not essential and primitive, diverse forms which diverse streams trace in the same bed. So it is with other men. Doubtless moral qualities are of the first rank; they are the motive power of civilisation, and constitute the nobleness of the individual; society exists by them alone, and by them alone man is great. But if they are the finest fruit of the human plant, they are not its root; they give us our value, but do not constitute our elements. Neither the vices nor the virtues of man are his nature; to praise or to blame him is not to know him; approbation or disapprobation does not define him; the names of good or bad tell us nothing of what he is. Put the robber Cartouche in an Italian court of the fifteenth century; he would be a great statesman. Transport this nobleman, stingy and narrow-minded, into a shop; he will be an exemplary tradesman. This public man, of inflexible probity, is in his drawing-room an intolerable coxcomb. This father of a family, so humane, is an idiotic politician. Change a virtue in its circumstances, and it becomes a vice; change a vice in its circumstances, and it becomes a virtue. Regard the same quality from two sides; on one it is a fault, on the other a merit. The essential of man is found concealed far below these moral badges; they only point out the useful or noxious effect of our inner constitution: they do not reveal our inner constitution. They are safety lamps or railway-lights attached to our names, to warn the passer-by to avoid or approach us; they are not the explanatory table of our being. Our true essence consists in the causes of our good or bad qualities, and these causes are discovered in the temperament, the species and degree of imagination, the amount and velocity of attention, the magnitude and direction of primitive passions. A character is a force, like gravity, weight, or steam, capable, as it may happen, of pernicious or profitable effects, and which must be defined otherwise than by the amount of the weight it can lift or the havoc it can cause. It is therefore to ignore man, to reduce him, as Thackeray and English literature generally do, to an aggregate of virtues and vices; it is to lose sight in him of all but the exterior and social side; it is to neglect the inner and natural element. You will find the same fault in English criticism, always moral, never psychological, bent on exactly measuring the degree of human honesty, ignorant of the mechanism of our sentiments and faculties; you will find the same fault in English religion, which is but an emotion or a discipline; in their philosophy, destitute of metaphysics; and if you ascend to the source, according to the rule which derives vices from virtues, and virtues from vices, you will see all these weaknesses derived from their native energy, their practical education, and that sort of severe and religious poetic instinct which has in time past made them Protestant and Puritan.

CHAPTER III.

Criticism and History.—Macaulay.

I. The vocation and position of Macaulay in England.

II. His *Essays*—Agreeable character and utility of the style—Opinions—Philosophy. Wherein it is English and practical—His *Essay on Bacon*—The true object, according to him, of the sciences—Comparison of Bacon with the ancients.

III. His criticism—Moral prejudices—Comparison of criticism in France and England—Why he is religious—Connection of religion and Liberalism in England—Macaulay's Liberalism—*Essay on Church and State.*

IV. His passion for political liberty—How he is the orator and historian of the Whig party—*Essays on the Revolution and the Stuarts.*

V. His talent—Taste for demonstration—Taste for development—Oratorical character of his mind—Wherein he differs from classic orators—His estimation for particular facts, experiment on the senses, personal reminiscences—Importance of decisive phenomena in every branch of knowledge—*Essays on Warren Hastings and Clive.*

VI. English marks of his talent—Rudeness—Humour—Poetry.

VII. His work—Harmony of his talent, opinion, and work—Universality, unity, interest of his history—Picture of the *Highlands—James* II. *in Ireland—The Act of Toleration—The Massacre of Glencoe*—Traces of amplification and rhetoric.

VIII. Comparison of Macaulay with French historians—Wherein he is classical—Wherein he is English—Intermediate position of his mind between the Latin and the Germanic mind.

I.

I SHALL not here attempt to write the life of Lord Macaulay. It can only be related after twenty years, when his friends shall have put together all their recollections of him. As to what is public now, it seems to me useless to recall it: every one knows that his father was an abolitionist and a philanthropist; that our Macaulay passed through a most brilliant and complete classical education; that at twenty-five his essay on Milton made him famous; that at thirty he entered Parliament, and took his standing there amongst the first orators; that he went to India to reform the law, and that on his return he was appointed to high offices; that on one occasion his liberal opinions in religious matters lost him the votes of his constituents; that he was re-elected amidst universal congratulations; that he continued to be the most celebrated

publicist and the most accomplished writer of the Whig party; and that on this ground, at the close of his life, the gratitude of his party and the public admiration, made him a peer of England. It will be a fine biography to write—a life of honour and happiness, devoted to noble ideas, and occupied by manly enterprises; literary in the first place, but sufficiently charged with action and immersed in business to furnish substance and solidity to his eloquence and style,—to create the observer side by side with the artist, and the thinker side by side with the writer. On the present occasion I will only describe the thinker and writer: I leave the life, I take his works; and first his *Essays*.

II.

His Essays are an assemblage of articles: I confess that I am fond of books such as these. In the first place, we can throw down the volume after a score of pages, begin at the end, or in the middle; we are not its slave, but its master; we can treat it like a newspaper: in fact, it is a journal of a mind. In the second place, it is varied; in turning over a page, we pass from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, from England to India: this diversity surprises and pleases. Lastly, involuntarily, the author is indiscreet; he displays himself to us, keeping back nothing; it is a familiar conversation, and no conversation is worth so much as that of England's greatest historian. We are pleased to mark the origin of this generous and powerful mind, to discover what faculties have nourished his talent, what researches have shaped his knowledge; what opinions he has formed on philosophy, religion, the state, literature; what he was, and what he has become; what he wishes, and what he believes.

Seated in our arm-chair, with our feet on the fender, we see little by little, as we turn over the leaves of the book, an animated and pensive face arise before us; the countenance assumes expression and clearness; his different features are mutually explained and lightened up; presently the author lives again for us, and before us; we perceive the causes and birth of all his thoughts, we foresee what he is going to say; his bearing and mode of speech are as familiar to us as those of a man whom we see every day; his opinions correct and affect our own; he enters into our thoughts and our life; he is two hundred leagues away, and his book stamps his image on us, as the reflected light paints on the horizon the object from which it is emitted. Such is the charm of books, which deal with all kinds of subjects, which give the author's opinion on all sorts of things, which lead us in all directions of his thoughts, and make us, so to speak, walk around his mind.

Macaulay treats philosophy in the English fashion, as a practical man. He is a disciple of Bacon, and sets him above all philosophers; he decides that genuine science dates from him; that the speculations of old thinkers are only the sport of the mind; that for two thousand

years the human mind was on a wrong tack; that only since Bacon it has discovered the goal to which it must turn, and the method by which it must arrive there. This goal is utility. The object of knowledge is not theory, but application. The object of mathematicians is not the satisfaction of an idle curiosity, but the invention of machines calculated to alleviate human labour, to increase the power of dominating nature, to render life more secure, commodious, and happy. The object of astronomy is not to furnish matter for vast calculations and poetical cosmogonies, but to subserve geography and to guide navigation. The object of anatomy and the zoological sciences is not to suggest eloquent systems on the nature of organisation, or to set before the eyes the orders of the animal kingdom by an ingenious classification, but to conduct the surgeon's hand and the physician's prognosis. The object of every research and every study is to diminish pain, to augment comfort, to ameliorate the condition of man; theoretical laws are serviceable only in their practical use; the labours of the laboratory and the cabinet receive their sanction and value only, through the use made of them by the workshops and mills; the tree of knowledge must be estimated only by its fruits. If we wish to judge of a philosophy, we must observe its effects; its works are not its books, but its acts. The philosophy of the ancients produced fine writings, sublime phrases, infinite disputes, hollow dreams, systems displaced by systems, and left the world as ignorant, as unhappy, and as wicked as it found it. That of Bacon produced observations, experiments, discoveries, machines, entire arts and industries:

'It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind.'[1]

The first was consumed in solving unsolvable enigmas, fabricating portraits of an imaginary sage, mounting from hypothesis to hypothesis, tumbling from absurdity to absurdity; it despised what was practicable, promised what was impracticable; and because it despised the limits of the human mind, ignored its power. The other, measuring our force and weakness, diverted us from roads that were closed to us, to start us on roads that were open to us; it recognised facts and laws, because

[1] Macaulay's Works, ed. Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. 1866; *Essay on Bacon*, vi. 222.

it resigned itself to remain ignorant of their essence and principles; it has rendered man more happy, because it has not pretended to render him perfect; it has discovered great truths and great effects, because it had the courage and good sense to study small things, and to creep for a long time over petty vulgar experiments; it has become glorious and powerful, because it has deigned to become humble and useful. Formerly, science furnished only vain pretensions and chimerical conceptions, whilst it held itself aloof, far from practical existence, and styled itself the sovereign of man. Now, science possesses acquired truths, the hope of loftier discoveries, an ever-increasing authority, because it has entered upon active existence, and it has declared itself the servant of man. Let her keep to her new functions; let her not try to penetrate the region of the invisible; let her renounce what must remain unknown; she does not contain her own issue, she is but a medium; man was not made for her, but she for man; she is like the thermometers and piles which she constructs for her own experiments; her whole glory, merit, and office, is to be an instrument:

'We have sometimes thought that an amusing fiction might be written, in which a disciple of Epictetus and a disciple of Bacon should be introduced as fellow-travellers. They come to a village where the small-pox has just begun to rage, and find houses shut up, intercourse suspended, the sick abandoned, mothers weeping in terror over their children. The Stoic assures the dismayed population that there is nothing bad in the small-pox, and that to a wise man disease, deformity, death, the loss of friends, are not evils. The Baconian takes out a lancet and begins to vaccinate. They find a body of miners in great dismay. An explosion of noisome vapours has just killed many of those who were at work; and the survivors are afraid to venture into the cavern. The Stoic assures them that such an accident is nothing but a mere *ἀποπροηγμένον*. The Baconian, who has no such fine word at his command, contents himself with devising a safety-lamp. They find a shipwrecked merchant wringing his hands on the shore. His vessel with an inestimable cargo has just gone down, and he is reduced in a moment from opulence to beggary. The Stoic exhorts him not to seek happiness in things which lie without himself, and repeats the whole chapter of Epictetus, *πρὸς τοὺς τὴν ἀπορίαν διδοικότας*. The Baconian constructs a diving-bell, goes down in it, and returns with the most precious effects from the wreck. It would be easy to multiply illustrations of the difference between the philosophy of thorns and the philosophy of fruit, the philosophy of words and the philosophy of works.'[1]

It is not for me to discuss these opinions; it is for the reader to blame or praise them, if he sees fit: I do not wish to criticise doctrines, but to depict a man; and truly nothing could be more striking than this absolute scorn for speculation, and this absolute love for the practical. Such a mind is entirely suitable to the national genius: in England a barometer is still called a philosophical instrument; and philosophy is there a thing unknown. The English have moralists, psychologists, but no metaphysicians: if there is one—Hamilton, for instance—

[1] Macaulay's Works; *Essay on Bacon*, vi. 223.

he is a sceptic in metaphysics; he has only read the German philosophers to refute them; he regards speculative philosophy as an extravagance of visionaries, and is compelled to ask his readers to pardon him for the strangeness of his matter, when he tries to make them understand somewhat of Hegel's conceptions. The English, positive and practical men, excellent politicians, administrators, fighters, and workers, are no more suited than the ancient Romans for the abstractions of subtle dialectics and grand systems; and Cicero, too, once excused himself, when he tried to expound to his audience of senators and public men, the deep and audacious deductions of the Stoics.

III.

The only part of philosophy which pleases men of this kind is morality, because, like them, it is wholly practical, and only attends to actions. Nothing else was studied at Rome, and every one knows what place it holds in English philosophy: Hutcheson, Price, Ferguson, Wollaston, Adam Smith, Bentham, Reid, and many others, have filled the last century with dissertations and discussions on the rule of duty, and the faculty which discovers our duty; and Macaulay's *Essays* are a new example of this national and dominant inclination: his biographies are less portraits than judgments. What strictly is the degree of uprightness and vice of the personage, that is the important question for him; he makes all other questions refer to it; he applies himself throughout only to justify, excuse, accuse, or condemn. If he speaks of Lord Clive, Warren Hastings, Sir William Temple, Addison, Milton, or any other man, he devotes himself first of all to measure exactly the number and greatness of their faults and virtues; he interrupts himself, in the midst of a narration, to examine whether the action, which he is relating, is just or unjust; he considers it as a legist and a moralist, according to positive and natural law; he takes into account the state of public opinion, the examples which surrounded the accused, the principles he professed, the education he has received; he bases his opinion on analogies drawn from ordinary life, from the history of all peoples, the laws of all countries; he brings forward so many proofs, such certain facts, such conclusive reasonings, that the best advocate might find a model in him; and when at last he pronounces judgment, we think we are listening to the summing up of a judge. If he analyses a literature—that of the Restoration, for instance—he empanels before the reader a sort of jury to judge it. He makes it appear at the bar, and reads the indictment; he then presents the plea of the defenders, who try to excuse its levities and indecencies: at last he begins to speak in his turn, and proves that the arguments set forth are not applicable to the case in question; that the accused writers have laboured effectually and with premeditation, to corrupt morals; that they not only employed unbecoming words, but that they designedly, and with deliberate intent, represented unbecoming

things; that they always took care to blot out the hatefulness of vice, to render virtue ridiculous, to place adultery amongst the good manners and necessary exploits of a man of taste; that this intention was all the more manifest from its being in the spirit of the times, and that they were pandering to a crime of their age. If I dare employ, like Macaulay, religious comparisons, I should say that his criticism was like the Last Judgment, in which the diversity of talents, characters, ranks, employments, will disappear before the consideration of virtue and vice, and where there will be no more artists, but a judge of the righteous and the sinners.

In France, criticism has a more literal gait; it is less subservient to morality, and nearer akin to art. When we try to relate a life, or paint the character of a man, we consider him very readily as a simple subject of painting or science: we only think of displaying the various feelings of his heart, the connection of his ideas, and the necessity of his actions; we do not judge him, we only wish to represent him to the eyes, and make him intelligible to the reason. We are spectators, and nothing more. What matters it if Peter or Paul is a rascal? that is the business of his contemporaries: they suffered from his vices, and ought to think only of despising and condemning him. Now we are beyond his reach, and hatred has disappeared with the danger. At this distance, and in the historic perspective, I see in him but a mental machine, provided with certain springs, animated by a primary impulse, affected by various circumstances. I calculate the play of his motives; I feel with him the impact of obstacles; I see beforehand the curve which his motion will trace out; I experience for him neither aversion nor disgust; I have left these feelings on the threshold of history, and I taste the very deep and pure pleasure of seeing a soul act after a definite law, in a fixed groove, with all the variety of human passions, with the succession and constraint which the inner structure of man imposes on the external development of his passions.

In a country where men are so much occupied by morality, and so little by philosophy, there is much religion. For lack of natural theology they have a positive theology, and demand from the Bible the metaphysics not supplied by reason. Macaulay is a Protestant; and though a very candid and liberal mind, he at times retains the English prejudices against the Catholic religion.[1] Popery in England always

[1] 'Charles himself, and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices,—a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance.'—Macaulay, v. 24; *Milton.*

'It is difficult to relate without a pitying smile, that in the sacrifice of the mass, Loyola saw transubstantiation take place, and that, as he stood praying on the steps of the Church of St. Dominic, he saw the Trinity in Unity, and wept aloud with joy and wonder.'—Macaulay, vi. 468; *Ranke, History of the Popes*

passes for an impious idolatry and for a degrading servitude. After two revolutions, Protestantism, allied to liberty, seemed to be the religion of liberty; and Roman-Catholicism, allied to despotism, seemed the religion of despotism: the two doctrines have both assumed the name of the cause which they sustained. To the first has been transferred the love and veneration which were felt for the rights which it defended; on the second has been poured the scorn and hatred which were felt for the slavery which it would have introduced: political passions have inflamed religious beliefs; Protestantism has been confounded with the victorious fatherland, Roman-Catholicism, with the conquered enemy the prejudice survived when the strife ended, and to this day English Protestants do not feel for the doctrines of Roman-Catholics the same goodwill or impartiality which French Roman-Catholics feel for the doctrines of Protestants.

But these English opinions are moderated in Macaulay by an ardent love for justice. He is liberal in the largest and best sense of the word. He demands that all citizens should be equal before the law, that men of all sects should be declared capable to fill all public functions—that Roman-Catholics and Jews may, as well as Lutherans, Anglicans, and Calvinists, sit in Parliament. He refutes Mr. Gladstone and the partisans of State religion with incomparable ardour and eloquence, abundance of proof, and force of argument; he clearly proves that the State is only a secular association, that its end is wholly temporal, that its single object is to protect the life, liberty, and property of the citizens; that in entrusting to it the defence of spiritual interests, we overturn the order of things; and that to attribute to it a religious belief, is as though a man, walking with his feet, should also confide to his feet the care of seeing and hearing. This question has often been discussed in France; it is so to this day; but no one has brought to it more common sense, more practical reasoning, more palpable arguments. Macaulay withdraws the discussion from the region of metaphysics; he brings it down to the earth; he makes it accessible to all minds; he takes his proofs and examples from the best known facts of ordinary life; he addresses the shopkeeper, the citizen, the artist, the scholar, every one; he connects the truth, which he asserts, with the familiar and intimate truths which no one can help admitting, and which are believed with all the force of experience and habit; he carries off and conquers our belief by such solid reasons, that his adversaries will thank him for convincing them; and if by chance a few amongst us have need of a lesson on tolerance, they had better look for it in Macaulay's essay on that subject.

IV.

This love of justice becomes a passion when political liberty is at stake; this is the sensitive point; and when we touch it, we touch the writer to the quick. Macaulay loves it interestedly, because it is the only guarantee of the properties, happiness, and life of individuals; he

loves it from pride, because it is the honour of man: he loves it from patriotism, because it is a legacy left by preceding generations; because for two hundred years a succession of upright and great men have defended it against all attacks, and preserved it in all dangers; because it has made the power and glory of England; because in teaching the citizens to will and to decide for themselves, it adds to their dignity and intelligence; because in assuring internal peace and continuous progress, it guarantees the land from bloody revolutions and silent decay. All these advantages are perpetually present to his eyes; and whoever attacks the liberty, which founds them, becomes at once his enemy. Macaulay cannot look calmly on the oppression of man; every outrage on human will hurts him like a personal outrage. At every step bitter words escape him, and the stale adulations of courtiers, which he meets with, bring to his lips a sarcasm the more violent from being the more deserved. Pitt, he says, at college wrote Latin verses on the death of George I. In this piece 'the Muses are earnestly entreated to weep over the urn of Cæsar: for Cæsar, says the poet, loved the muses; Cæsar, who could not read a line of Pope, and who loved nothing but punch and fat women.'[1] Elsewhere, in the biography of Miss Burney, he relates how the poor young lady, having become celebrated by her two first novels, received as a reward, and as a great favour, a place of keeper of the robes of Queen Charlotte; how, worn out with watching, sick, nearly dying, she asked as a favour the permission to depart; how 'the sweet queen' was indignant at this impertinence, unable to understand that any one could refuse to die in and for her service, or that a woman of letters should prefer health, life, and glory to the honour of folding her Majesty's dresses. But it is when Macaulay comes to the history of the Revolution that he hauls to justice and vengeance those who had violated the rights of the public, who had hated and betrayed the popular cause, who had outraged liberty. He does not speak as a historian, but as a contemporary; it seems as though his life and his honour were at stake, that he pleaded for himself, that he was a member of the Long Parliament, that he heard at the door the muskets and swords of the guards sent to arrest Pym and Hampden. M. Guizot has related the same history; but you recognise in his book the calm judgment and impartial emotion of a philosopher. He does not condemn the actions of Strafford or Charles; he explains them; he shows in Strafford the imperious character, the domineering genius which feels itself born to command and to break through oppositions, whom an invincible bent rouses against the law or the right which restrains him, who oppresses from a sort of inner craving, and who is made to govern as a sword is to strike. He shows in Charles the innate respect for royalty, the belief in divine right, the rooted conviction that every remonstrance or demand is an insult to his crown, an outrage on his

[1] Macaulay, vi. 39 *An Essay on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham.*

person, an impious and criminal sedition. Thenceforth you see in the strife of king and parliament but the strife of two doctrines; you cease to take an interest in one or the other, to take an interest in both; you are spectators of a drama; you are no longer judges at a trial. But it is a trial which Macaulay conducts before us; he takes a side in it; his account is the address of a public prosecutor before the court, the most entrancing, the most harsh, the best reasoned, that was ever written. He approves of the condemnation of Strafford; he honours and admires Cromwell; he exalts the character of the Puritans; he praises Hampden to such a degree, that he calls him the equal of Washington; he has no words scornful and insulting enough for Laud; and what is more terrible, each of his judgments is justified by as many quotations, authorities, historic precedents, arguments, conclusive proofs, as the vast erudition of Hallam or the calm dialectics of Mackintosh could have assembled. Judge of this transport of passion and this withering logic by a single passage:

'For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious King who had recognised them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament: another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

'The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

'We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

'For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.'[1]

This is for the father; now the son will receive something. The reader will perceive, by the furious invective, what excessive rancour the government of the Stuarts left in the heart of a patriot, a Whig, a Protestant, and an Englishman:

'Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.'[2]

This piece, with all the biblical metaphors, and which has preserved something of the tone of Milton and the Puritan prophets, shows to what an issue the various tendencies of this great mind were turning—what was its bent—how the practical spirit, science and historic talent, the unvaried presence of moral and religious ideas, love of country and justice, concurred to make of Macaulay the historian of liberty.

V.

In this his talent assisted him; for his opinions are akin to his talent.

What first strikes us in him is the extreme solidity of his mind. He proves all that he says, with astonishing vigour and authority. We are almost certain never to go astray in following him. If he cites a witness, he begins by measuring the veracity and intelligence of the authors quoted, and by correcting the errors they may have committed, through negligence or partiality. If he pronounces a judgment, he relies on the most certain facts, the clearest principles, the simplest and most logical deductions. If he develops an argument, he never loses himself in a digression; he always has his goal before his eyes;

[1] Macaulay, v, 27; *Milton.* [2] *Ibid.* v. 35; *Milton*

he advances towards it by the surest and straightest road. If he rises to general consideration, he mounts step by step through all the grades of generalisation, without omitting one; he feels the ground every instant; he neither adds nor subtracts from facts; he desires, at the cost of every precaution and research, to arrive at the precise truth. He knows an infinity of details of every kind; he owns a great number of philosophic ideas of every species; but his erudition is as well tempered as his philosophy, and both constitute a coin worthy of circulation, amongst all thinking minds. We feel that he believes nothing without reason; that if we doubted one of the facts which he advances, or one of the views which he propounds, we should at once encounter a multitude of authentic documents and a serried phalanx of convincing arguments. In France and Germany we are too accustomed to receive hypotheses for historic laws, and doubtful anecdotes for attested events. We too often see whole systems established, from day to day, according to the caprice of a writer; a sort of fantastic castles, whose regular arrangement simulates the appearance of genuine edifices, and which vanish at a breath, when we come to touch them. We have all made theories, in a fireside discussion, in case of need, when for lack of argument we required a fictitious reasoning, like those Chinese generals who, to terrify their enemies, place amongst their troops formidable monsters of painted cardboard. We have judged men at random, under the impression of the moment, on a detached action, an isolated document; and we have dressed them up with vices or virtues, folly or genius, without controlling by logic or criticism the hazardous decisions, to which our precipitation had carried us. Thus we feel a deep satisfaction and a sort of internal peace, on leaving so many doctrines of ephemeral bloom in our books or reviews, to follow the steady gait of a guide so clear-sighted, reflective, instructed, able to lead us aright. We understand why the English accuse the French of being frivolous, and the Germans of being chimerical. Macaulay brings to the moral sciences that spirit of circumspection, that desire for certainty, and that instinct of truth, which make up the practical mind, and which from the time of Bacon have constituted the scientific merit and power of his nation. If art and beauty are lost, truth and certainty are gained; and no one, for instance, would blame our author for inserting the following demonstration in the life of Addison:

'He (Pope) asked Addison's advice. Addison said that the poem as it stood was a delicious little thing, and entreated Pope not to run the risk of marring what was so excellent in trying to mend it. Pope afterwards declared that this insidious counsel first opened his eyes to the baseness of him who gave it.

'Now there can be no doubt that Pope's plan was most ingenious, and that he afterwards executed it with great skill and success. But does it necessarily follow that Addison's advice was bad? And if Addison's advice was bad, does it necessarily follow that it was given from bad motives? If a friend were to ask us whether we would advise him to risk his all in a lottery of which the chances were ten to one against him, we should do our best to dissuade him from running such

a risk. Even if he were so lucky as to get the thirty thousand pound prize, we should not admit that we had counselled him ill; and we should certainly think it the height of injustice in him to accuse us of having been actuated by malice. We think Addison's advice good advice. It rested on a sound principle, the result of long and wide experience. The general rule undoubtedly is that, when a successful work of imagination has been produced, it should not be recast. We cannot at this moment call to mind a single instance in which this rule has been transgressed with happy effect, except the instance of the Rape of the Lock. Tasso recast his Jerusalem, Akenside recast his Pleasures of the Imagination and his Epistle to Curio. Pope himself, emboldened no doubt by the success with which he had expanded and remodelled the Rape of the Lock, made the same experiment on the Dunciad. All these attempts failed. Who was to foresee that Pope would, once in his life, be able to do what he could not himself do twice, and what nobody else has ever done?

'Addison's advice was good. But had it been bad, why should we pronounce it dishonest? Scott tells us that one of his best friends predicted the failure of Waverley. Herder adjured Goethe not to take so unpromising a subject as Faust. Hume tried to dissuade Robertson from writing the History of Charles the Fifth. Nay, Pope himself was one of those who prophesied that Cato would never succeed on the stage, and advised Addison to print it without risking a representation. But Scott, Goethe, Robertson, Addison, had the good sense and generosity to give their advisers credit for the best intentions. Pope's heart was not of the same kind with theirs.'[1]

What does the reader think of this dilemma, and this double series of inductions? The demonstration would not be more studied or rigorous, if a physical law were in question.

This demonstrative talent was increased by the talent for development. Macaulay enlightens inattentive minds, as well as he convinces opposing minds; he manifests, as well as he persuades, and spreads as much evidence over obscure questions as certitude over doubtful points. It is impossible not to understand him; he approaches the subject under every aspect, he turns it over on every side; it seems as though he addressed himself to every spectator, and studied to make himself understood by every individual; he calculates the scope of every mind, and seeks for each a fit mode of exposition; he takes us all by the hand, and leads us alternately to the end, which he has marked out beforehand. He sets out from the simplest facts, he descends to our level, he brings himself even with our mind; he spares us the pain of the slightest effort; then he leads us on, and smoothes the road throughout; we rise gradually without perceiving the slope, and at the end we find ourselves at the top, after having walked as easily as on the plain. When a subject is obscure, he is not content with a first explanation; he gives a second, then a third: he sheds light in abundance from all sides, he searches for it in all regions of history; and the wonderful thing is, that he is never long. In reading him we find ourselves in our proper sphere; we feel as though we were born to understand; we are annoyed to have

[1] Macaulay, vii. 109; *Life and Writings of Addison.*

taken twilight so long for day; we rejoice to see this abounding light rising and leaping forth in streams; the exact style, the antithesis of ideas, the harmonious construction, the artfully balanced paragraphs, the vigorous summaries, the regular sequence of thoughts, the frequent comparisons, the fine arrangement of the whole—not an idea or phrase of his writings in which the talent and the desire to explain, the characteristic of an orator, does not shine forth. Macaulay was a member of Parliament, and spoke so well, we are told, that he was listened to for the mere pleasure of listening. The habit of public speaking is perhaps the cause of this incomparable lucidity. To convince a great assembly, we must address all the members; to rivet the attention of absent-minded and weary men, we must save them from all fatigue; they must take in too much in order to take in enough. Public speaking vulgarises ideas; it drags truth from the height at which it dwells, with some thinkers, to bring it amongst the crowd; it reduces it to the level of ordinary minds, who, without this intervention, would only have seen it from afar, and high above them. Thus, when great orators consent to write, they are the most powerful of writers; they make philosophy popular; they lift all minds a stage higher, and seem to magnify human intelligence. In the hands of Cicero, the dogmas of the Stoics and the dialectics of the Academicians lose their prickles. The subtle Greek arguments become united and easy; the hard problems of providence, immortality, highest good, become public property. Senators, men of business, lawyers, lovers of formulas and procedure, the massive and narrow intelligence of publicists, comprehend the deductions of Chrysippus; and the book *De Officiis* has made the morality of Panætius popular. In our days, M. Thiers, in his two great histories, has placed within reach of everybody the most involved questions of strategy and finance; if he would write a course of political economy for street-porters, I am sure he would be understood; and pupils of the lower classes at school have been able to read M. Guizot's *History of Civilisation*.

When, with the faculty for proof and explanation, a man feels the desire, he arrives at vehemence. These serried and multiplied arguments which all tend to a single aim, those reiterated logical points, returning every instant, one upon the other, to shake the opponent, give heat and passion to the style. Rarely was eloquence more sweeping than Macaulay's. He has an oratorical impetus; all his phrases have a tone; we feel that he would govern minds, that he is irritated by resistance, that he fights as he discusses. In his books the discussion always seizes and carries away the reader; it advances evenly, with accumulating force, straightforward, like those great American rivers, impetuous as a torrent and wide as a sea. This abundance of thought and style, this multitude of explanations, ideas, and facts, this vast aggregate of historical knowledge goes rolling on, urged forward by internal passion, sweeping away objections in its course, and adding to the dash of eloquence the irresistible force of its mass and weight.

We might say that the history of James II. is a discourse in two volumes, pronounced in a breath, with never-failing voice. We see the oppression and discontent begin, increase, widen, the partisans of James abandoning him one by one, the idea of revolution conceived in all hearts, confirmed, fixed, the preparations made, the event approaching, growing imminent, then suddenly falling on the blind and unjust monarch, and sweeping away his throne and dynasty, with the violence of a foreseen and fatal tempest. True eloquence is that which thus perfects argument by emotion, which reproduces the unity of events by the unity of passion, which repeats the motion and the chain of facts by the motion and the chain of ideas. It is a genuine imitation of nature; more complete than pure analysis; it reanimates beings; its dash and vehemence form part of science and of truth. Of whatever subject he treats, political economy, morality, philosophy, literature, history, Macaulay is impassioned for his subject. The current which bears away events, excites in him, as soon as he sees it, a current which bears forward his thought. He does not set forth his opinion; he pleads it. He has that energetic, sustained, and vibrating tone which bows down opposition and conquers belief. His thought is an active force; it is imposed on the hearer; it attacks him with such superiority, falls upon him with such a train of proofs, such a manifest and legitimate authority, such a powerful impulse, that we never think of resisting it; and it masters the heart by its vehemence, whilst at the same time it masters the reason by its evidence.

All these gifts are common to orators; they are found in different proportions and degrees, in men like Cicero and Livy, Bourdaloue and Bossuet, Fox and Burke. These fine and solid minds form a natural family, and all have for their chief feature the habit and talent of passing from particular to general ideas, orderly and successively, as we climb a ladder by setting our feet one after the other on every round. The inconvenience of this art is the use of common-place. They who practise it, do not depict objects with precision; they fall easily into vague rhetoric. They hold in their hands ready-made developments, a sort of portative scales, equally applicable on both sides of the same and every question. They continue willingly in a middle region, amongst the tirades and arguments of the special pleader, with an indifferent knowledge of the human heart, and a fair number of amplifications on that which is useful and just. In France and at Rome, amongst the Latin races, especially in the seventeenth century, these men love to hover above the earth, amidst grand words or general considerations, in the style of the drawing-room and the academy. They do not descend to minor facts, illustrative details, circumstantial examples of vulgar life. They are more inclined to plead than to prove. In this Macaulay is distinguished from them. His principle is, that a special fact has more hold on the mind than a general reflection. He knows that, to give men a clear and vivid idea, they must be brought back to their personal

experience. He remarks[1] that, in order to make them realise a storm, the only method is to recall to them some storm which they have themselves seen and heard, with which their memory is still charged, and which still re-echoes through all their senses. He practises in his style the philosophy of Bacon and Locke. With him, as well as with them, the origin of every idea is a sensation. Every complicated argument, every entire conception, has certain particular facts for its only support. It is so for every structure of ideas, as well as for a scientific theory. Beneath long calculations, algebraical formulas, subtle deductions, written volumes which contain the combinations and elaborations of learned minds, there are two or three sensible experiences, two or three little facts on which you may lay your finger, a turn of the wheel in a machine, a scalpel-cut in a living body, an unlooked-for colour in a liquid. These are decisive specimens. The whole substance of theory, the whole force of proof, is contained in this. Truth is here, as a nut in its shell: painful and ingenious discussion adds nothing thereto; it only extracts the nut. Thus, if you would rightly prove, you must before all present these specimens, insist upon them, make them visible and tangible to the reader, as far as may be done in words. This is difficult, for words are not things. The only resource of the writer is to employ words which bring things before the eyes. For this he must appeal to the reader's personal observation, set out from his experience, compare the unknown objects presented to him with the known objects which he sees every day, place past events beside contemporary events. Macaulay always has before his mind English imaginations, full of English images, I mean full of the detailed and present recollections of a London street, a dram-shop, a wretched alley, an afternoon in Hyde Park, a moist green landscape, a white ivy-covered country-house, a clergyman in a white tie, a sailor in a sou'-wester. He has recourse to such recollections; he makes them still more precise by descriptions and statistics; he notes colours and qualities; he has a passion for exactness; his descriptions are worthy both of a painter and a topographer; he writes like a man who sees the physical and sensible object, and who at the same time classifies and weighs it. You will see him carry his figures even to moral or literary worth, assign to an action, a virtue, a book, a talent, its compartment and its step in the scale, with such clearness and relief, that we could easily imagine ourselves in a classified museum, not of stuffed skins, but of sensitive, suffering living animals.

Consider, for instance, these phrases, by which he tries to render visible to an English public, events in India:

'During that interval the business of a servant of the Company was simply to wring out of the natives a hundred or two hundred thousand pounds as speedily as possible, that he might return home before his constitution had suffered from the

[1] See in his *Essay on the Life and Writings of Addison* (vii. 73) Macaulay's remarks on the *Campaign*.

heat, to marry a peer's daughter, to buy rotten boroughs in Cornwall, and to give balls in St. James' Square.[1] . . . There was still a nabob of Bengal, who stood to the English rulers of his country in the same relation in which Augustulus stood to Odoacer, or the last Merovingians to Charles Martel and Pepin. He lived at Moorshedabad, surrounded by princely magnificence. He was approached with outward marks of reverence, and his name was used in public instruments. But in the government of the country he had less real share than the youngest writer or cadet in the Company's service.'[2]

Of Nuncomar, the native servant of the Company, he writes:

'Of his moral character it is difficult to give a notion to those who are acquainted with human nature only as it appears in our island. What the Italian is to the Englishman, what the Hindoo is to the Italian, what the Bengalee is to other Hindoos, that was Nuncomar to other Bengalees. The physical organization of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness, for purposes of manly resistance; but its suppleness and its tact move the children of sterner climates to admiration not unmingled with contempt. All those arts which are the natural defence of the weak are more familiar to this subtle race than to the Ionian of the time of Juvenal, or to the Jew of the dark ages. What the horns are to the buffalo, what the paw is to the tiger, what the sting is to the bee, what beauty, according to the old Greek song, is to woman, deceit is to the Bengalee. Large promises, smooth excuses, elaborate tissues of circumstantial falsehood, chicanery, perjury, forgery, are the weapons, offensive and defensive, of the people of the Lower Ganges. All those millions do not furnish one sepoy to the armies of the Company. But as usurers, as money-changers, as sharp legal practitioners, no class of human beings can bear a comparison with them.'[3]

It was such men and such affairs, which were to provide Burke with the amplest and most brilliant subject-matter for his eloquence; and when Macaulay described the distinctive talent of the great orator, he described his own:

'He (Burke) had, in the highest degree, that noble faculty whereby man is able to live in the past and in the future, in the distant and in the unreal. India and its inhabitants were not to him, as to most Englishmen, mere names and abstractions, but a real country and a real people. The burning sun, the strange vegetation of the palm and the cocoa-tree, the rice-field, the tank, the huge trees, older than the Mogul empire, under which the village crowds assemble; the thatched roof of the peasant's hut; the rich tracery of the mosque where the imaum prays with his face to Mecca, the drums, and banners, and gaudy idols, the devotee swinging in the air, the graceful maiden, with the pitcher on her head, descending the steps to the river-side, the black faces, the long beards, the yellow streaks of sect, the turbans and the flowing robes, the spears and the silver maces, the elephants with their canopies of state, the gorgeous palanquin of the prince, and the close litter of the noble lady, all those things were to him as the objects amidst which his own life

[1] Macaulay, vi. 549; *Warren Hastings*. [2] *Ibid.* 553. [3] *Ibid.* 555.

had been passed, as the objects which lay on the road between Beaconsfield and St. James's Street. All India was present to the eye of his mind, from the halls where suitors laid gold and perfumes at the feet of sovereigns, to the wild moor where the gipsy camp was pitched, from the bazar, humming like a bee-hive with the crowd of buyers and sellers, to the jungle where the lonely courier shakes his bunch of iron rings to scare away the hyænas. He had just as lively an idea of the insurrection at Benares as of Lord George Gordon's riots, and of the execution of Nuncomar as of the execution of Dr. Dodd. Oppression in Bengal was to him the same thing as oppression in the streets of London.'[1]

VI.

Other forms of his talent are more peculiarly English. Macaulay has a rough touch; when he strikes, he knocks down. Béranger sings:

'Chez nous, point,
Point de ces coups de poing
Qui font tant d'honneur à l'Angleterre.'[2]

And the French reader would be astonished if he heard a great historian treat an illustrious poet in this style:

'But in all those works in which Mr. Southey has completely abandoned narration, and has undertaken to argue moral and political questions, his failure has been complete and ignominious. On such occasions his writings are rescued from utter contempt and derision solely by the beauty and purity of the English. We find, we confess, so great a charm in Mr. Southey's style that, even when he writes nonsense, we generally read it with pleasure, except indeed when he tries to be droll. A more insufferable jester never existed. He very often attempts to be humorous, and yet we do not remember a single occasion on which he has succeeded farther than to be quaintly and flippantly dull. In one of his works he tells us that Bishop Spratt was very properly so called, inasmuch as he was a very small poet. And in the book now before us he cannot quote Francis Bugg, the renegade Quaker, without a remark on his unsavoury name. A wise man might talk folly like this by his own fireside; but that any human being, after having made such a joke, should write it down, and copy it out, and transmit it to the printer, and correct the proof-sheets, and send it forth into the world, is enough to make us ashamed of our species.'[3]

We may imagine that Macaulay does not treat better the dead than the living. Thus he speaks of Archbishop Laud:

The severest punishment which the two Houses could have inflicted on him would have been to set him at liberty and send him to Oxford. There he might have staid, tortured by his own diabolical temper, hungering for Puritans to pillory and mangle, plaguing the Cavaliers, for want of somebody else to plague, with his peevishness and absurdity, performing grimaces and antics in the cathedral, continuing that incomparable diary, which we never see without forgetting the vices of his heart in the imbecility of his intellect, minuting down his dreams, counting the drops of blood which fell from his nose, watching the direction of the salt, and listening for the note of the screech-owls. Contemptuous mercy was

[1] Macaulay, vi. 619; *Warren Hastings.*

[2] Béranger, *Chansons*, 2 vols. 1853; *Les Boxeurs, ou L'Anglomanie.*

[3] Macaulay, v. 333; *Southey's Colloquies on Society.*

the only vengeance which it became the Parliament to take on such a ridiculous old bigot.'[1]

While he jests he remains grave, as do almost all the writers of his country. Humour consists in saying extremely comical things in a solemn tone, and in preserving a lofty style and ample phraseology, at the very moment when you are making all your hearers laugh. Such is the beginning of an article on a new historian of Burleigh:

'The work of Dr. Nares has filled us with astonishment similar to that which Captain Lemuel Gulliver felt when first he landed in Brobdignag, and saw corn as high as the oaks in the New Forest, thimbles as large as buckets, and wrens of the bulk of turkeys. The whole book, and every component part of it, is on a gigantic scale. The title is as long as an ordinary preface: the prefatory matter would furnish out an ordinary book: and the book contains as much reading as an ordinary library. We cannot sum up the merits of the stupendous mass of paper which lies before us better than by saying that it consists of about two thousand closely printed quarto pages, that it occupies fifteen hundred inches cubic measure, and that it weighs sixty pounds avoirdupois. Such a book might, before the deluge, have been considered as light reading by Hilpah and Shalum. But unhappily the life of man is now threescore years and ten; and we cannot but think it somewhat unfair in Dr. Nares to demand from us so large a portion of so short an existence.'[2]

This comparison, borrowed from Swift, is a mockery in Swift's taste. Mathematics become in English hands an excellent means of raillery; and we remember how the Dean, comparing Roman and English generosity by numbers, overwhelmed Marlborough by an addition. Humour employs against the people it attacks, positive facts, commercial arguments, odd contrasts drawn from vulgar life. This surprises and perplexes the reader, without warning; he falls abruptly in some familiar and grotesque detail; the shock is violent; he bursts out laughing without being much amused; the hit comes so suddenly and hard, that it is like a knock-down blow. For instance, Macaulay is refuting those who would not print the indecent classical authors:

'We find it difficult to believe that, in a world so full of temptations as this, any gentleman whose life would have been virtuous if he had not read Aristophanes and Juvenal will be made vicious by reading them. A man who, exposed to all the influences of such a state of society as that in which we live, is yet afraid of exposing himself to the influence of a few Greek or Latin verses, acts, we think, much like the felon who begged the sheriffs to let him have an umbrella held over his head from the door of Newgate to the gallows, because it was a drizzling morning, and he was apt to take cold.'[3]

Irony, sarcasm, the bitterest kinds of pleasantry, are the rule with Englishmen. They tear when they scratch. To be convinced of this, we should compare French scandal, as Molière represents it in the

[1] Macaulay, v. 204; *Hallam's Constitutional History.*
[2] *Ibid.* v. 587; *Burleigh and his Times.*
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 491; *Comic Dramatists of the Restoration.*

Misanthrope, with English scandal as Sheridan represents it, imitating Molière and the *Misanthrope*. Célimène pricks, but does not wound; Lady Sneerwell's friends wound, and leave bloody marks on all the reputations which they handle. The raillery, which I am about to give, is one of Macaulay's tenderest:

'They (the ministers) therefore gave the command to Lord Galway, an experienced veteran, a man who was in war what Molière's doctors were in medicine, who thought it much more honourable to fail according to rule, than to succeed by innovation, and who would have been very much ashamed of himself if he had taken Monjuich by means so strange as those which Peterborough employed. This great commander conducted the campaign of 1707 in the most scientific manner. On the plain of Almanza he encountered the army of the Bourbons. He drew up his troops according to the methods prescribed by the best writers, and in a few hours lost eighteen thousand men, a hundred and twenty standards, all his baggage and all his artillery.'[1]

These roughnesses are all the stronger, because the ordinary tone is noble and serious.

Hitherto we have seen only the reasoner, the scholar, the orator, and the wit: there is still in Macaulay a poet; and if we had not read his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, it would suffice to read a few of his periods, in which the imagination, long held in check by the severity of the proof, breaks out suddenly in splendid metaphors, and expands into magnificent comparisons, worthy by their amplitude of being introduced into an epic:

'Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!'[2]

These noble words come from the heart; the fount is full, and though it flows, it never becomes dry. As soon as the writer speaks of a cause which he loves, as soon as he sees Liberty rise before him, with Humanity and Justice, Poetry bursts forth spontaneously from his soul, and sets her crown on the brows of her noble sisters:

'The Reformation is an event long past. That volcano has spent its rage. The wide waste produced by its outbreak is forgotten. The landmarks which were swept away have been replaced. The ruined edifices have been repaired. The lava

[1] Macaulay, v. 672; *Lord Mahon's War of the Succession in Spain.*

[2] Macaulay, v. 31; *Milton.*

has covered with a rich incrustation the fields which it once devastated, and, after having turned a beautiful and fruitful garden into a desert, has again turned the desert into a still more beautiful and fruitful garden. The second great eruption is not yet over. The marks of its ravages are still all around us. The ashes are still hot beneath our feet. In some directions, the deluge of fire still continues to spread. Yet experience surely entitles us to believe that this explosion, like that which preceded it, will fertilise the soil which it has devastated. Already, in those parts which have suffered most severely, rich cultivation and secure dwellings have begun to appear amidst the waste. The more we read of the history of past ages, the more we observe the signs of our own times, the more do we feel our hearts filled and swelled up by a good hope for the future destinies of the human race.'[1]

I ought, perhaps, in concluding this analysis, to point out the imperfections caused by these high qualities; how ease, grace, kindly animation, variety, simplicity, pleasantness, are wanting in this manly eloquence, this solid reasoning, and this glowing dialectic; why the art of writing and classical purity are not always found in this partisan, fighting from his platform; in short, why an Englishman is not a Frenchman or an Athenian. I prefer to transcribe another passage, the solemnity and magnificence of which will give some idea of the grave and opulent adornments, which Macaulay throws over his narrative, a sort of potent vegetation, flowers of brilliant purple, like those which are spread over every page of *Paradise Lost* and *Childe Harold*. Warren Hastings had returned from India, and had just been placed on his trial:

'On the thirteenth of February, 1788, the sittings of the Court commenced. There have been spectacles more dazzling to the eye, more gorgeous with jewellery and cloth of gold, more attractive to grown-up children, than that which was then exhibited at Westminster; but, perhaps, there never was a spectacle so well calculated to strike a highly cultivated, a reflecting, an imaginative mind. All the various kinds of interest which belong to the near and to the distant, to the present and to the past, were collected on one spot, and in one hour. All the talents and all the accomplishments which are developed by liberty and civilisation, were now displayed, with every advantage that could be derived both from co-operation and from contrast. Every step in the proceedings carried the mind either backward, through many troubled centuries, to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away, over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left. The High Court of Parliament was to sit, according to forms handed down from the days of the Plantagenets, on an Englishman accused of exercising tyranny over the lord of the holy city of Benares, and over the ladies of the princely house of Oude.

'The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great Hall of William Rufus, the hall which had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings, the hall which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers, the hall where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment, the hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame. Neither military nor civil pomp was wanting. The

[1] Macaulay, v. 595; *Burleigh and his Times*.

avenues were lined with grenadiers. The streets were kept clear by cavalry. The peers, robed in gold and ermine, were marshalled by the heralds under Garter King-at-arms. The judges in their vestments of state attended to give advice on points of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords, three-fourths of the Upper House as the Upper House then was, walked in solemn order from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior baron present led the way, George Eliott, Lord Heathfield, recently ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets and armies of France and Spain. The long procession was closed by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of the realm, by the great dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the King. Last of all came the Prince of Wales, conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing. The grey old walls were hung with scarlet. The long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator. There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art. There were seated round the Queen the fair-haired young daughters of the house of Brunswick. There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present. There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage. There the historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres, and when, before a senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa. There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age. The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the sweet smiles of so many noble matrons. It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition, a treasure too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid. There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There too was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay. There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, criticized, and exchanged repartees, under the rich peacock-hangings of Mrs. Montague. And there the ladies whose lips, more persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried the Westminster election against palace and treasury, shone round Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire.'[1]

This evocation of the national history, glory, and constitution forms a picture of a unique kind. The species of patriotism and poetry which it reveals is an abstract of Macaulay's talent; and the talent, like the picture, is thoroughly English.

VII.

Thus prepared, he entered upon the History of England; and he chose therefrom the period best suited to his political opinions, his style, his passion, his science, the national taste, the sympathy of Europe. He has related the establishment of the English constitution, and con-

[1] Macaulay, vi. 628; *Warren Hastings.*

centrated all the rest of history about this unique event, 'the finest in the world,' to the mind of an Englishman and a politician. He has brought to this work a new method of great beauty, extreme power; its success has been extraordinary. When the second volume appeared, 30,000 copies were ordered beforehand. Let us try to describe this history, to connect it with that method, and that method to that order of mind.

The history is universal, and not broken. It comprehends events of every kind, and treats of them simultaneously. Some have related the history of races, others of classes, others of governments, others of sentiments, ideas, and manners; Macaulay has related all.

'I should very imperfectly execute the task which I have undertaken if I were merely to treat of battles and sieges, of the rise and fall of administrations, of intrigues in the palace, and of debates in the parliament. It will be my endeavour to relate the history of the people as well as the history of the government, to trace the progress of useful and ornamental arts, to describe the rise of religious sects and the changes of literary taste, to portray the manners of successive generations, and not to pass by with neglect even the revolutions which have taken place in dress, furniture, repasts, and public amusements. I shall cheerfully bear the reproach of having descended below the dignity of history, if I can succeed in placing before the English of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors.'[1]

He kept his word. He has separated nothing, and passed nothing by. His portraits are mingled with his narrative. Read those of Danby, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Howe, during the account of a session, between two parliamentary divisions. Short curious anecdotes, domestic details, the description of furniture, intersect, without disjointing, the record of a war. Quitting the narrative of important business, we gladly look upon the Dutch tastes of William, the Chinese museum, the grottos, the mazes, aviaries, ponds, geometrical garden-beds, with which he defaced Hampton Court. A political dissertation precedes or follows the relation of a battle; at other times the author is a tourist or a psychologist before becoming a politician or a tactician. He describes the highlands of Scotland, semi-papistical and semi-pagan, the seers wrapped in bulls' hides to await the moment of inspiration, baptized men making libations of milk or beer to the demons of the place, pregnant women, girls of eighteen, working a wretched patch of oats, whilst their husbands or fathers, athletic men, basked in the sun; robbery and barbarities looked upon as honourable deeds; men stabbed from behind or burnt alive; repulsive food, coarse oats, and cakes, made of the blood of a live cow, offered to guests as a mark of favour and politeness; infected hovels where men lay on the bare ground, and where they woke up half smothered, half blind, and half mad with the itch. The next instant he stops to mark a change in the public taste, the horror

[1] Macaulay, i. 2; *History of England before the Restoration*, ch. i.

then experienced on account of these brigands' retreats, this country of wild rocks and barren moors; the admiration now felt for this land of heroic warriors, this country of grand mountains, seething waterfalls, picturesque defiles. He finds in the progress of physical welfare the causes of this moral revolution, and concludes that, if we praise mountains and a wild life, it is because we are satiated with security. He is successively an economist, a literary man, a publicist, an artist, an historian, a biographer, a story-teller, even a philosopher; by this diversity of parts he imitates the diversity of human life, and presents to the eyes, heart, mind, all the faculties of man, the complete history of the civilisation of his country.

Others, like Hume, have tried or are trying to do it. They set forth now religious matters, a little further political events, then literary details, finally general considerations on the change of society and government, believing that a collection of histories is history, and that parts joined endwise are a body. Macaulay did not believe it, and he did well. Though English, he had the spirit of harmony. So many accumulated events form with him not a total, but a whole. Explanations, accounts, dissertations, anecdotes, illustrations, comparisons, allusions to modern events, all hold together in his book. It is because all hold together in his mind. He had a most lively consciousness of causes; and causes unite facts. By them, scattered events are assembled into a single event; they unite them because they produce them, and the historian, who seeks them all out, cannot fail to perceive or to feel the unity which is their effect. Read, for instance, the voyage of James II. to Ireland: no picture is more curious. Is it, however, nothing more than a curious picture? When the king arrived at Cork, there were no horses to be found. The country is a desert. No more industry, cultivation, civilisation, since the English and Protestant colonists were driven out, robbed, slain. James was received between two hedges of Rapparees, armed with skeans, stakes, and half-pikes; under his horse's feet they spread by way of carpet the rough frieze mantles, such as the brigands and shepherds wore. He was offered garlands of cabbage stalks for crowns of laurel. In a large district he only found two carts. The palace of the lord-lieutenant in Dublin was so ill built, that the rain drenched the rooms. The king left for Ulster; the French officers thought they were travelling 'through the deserts of Arabia. The Count d'Avaux wrote to the French court, that, to get a truss of hay, they had to send five or six miles. At Charlemont, with great difficulty, as a mark of high favour, they obtained a sack of groats for the French embassy. The superior officers lay in dens which they would have thought too foul for their dogs. The Irish soldiers were half-savage marauders, who could only shout, cut throats, and disband. Ill fed on potatoes and sour milk, they cast themselves like starved men on the great flocks belonging to the Protestants. They greedily tore the flesh of oxen and sheep, and swallowed it half raw and

half rotten. For lack of kettles, they cooked it in the skin. When Lent began, the plunderers generally ceased to devour, but continued to destroy. A peasant would kill a cow merely in order to get a pair of brogues. At times a band slaughtered fifty or sixty beasts, took the skins, and left the bodies to poison the air. The French ambassador reckoned that in six weeks, there had been slain 50,000 horned cattle, which were rotting on the ground. They counted the number of the sheep and lambs slain at 400,000. Cannot the result of the rebellion be seen beforehand? What could be expected of these gluttonous serfs, so stupid and savage? What could be drawn from a devastated land, peopled with robbers? To what kind of discipline could these marauders and butchers be subjected? What resistance will they make on the Boyne, when they see William's old regiments, the furious squadrons of French refugees, the enraged and insulted Protestants of Londonderry and Enniskillen, leap into the river and run with uplifted swords against their muskets? They will flee, the king at their head; and the minute anecdotes, scattered amidst the account of receptions, voyages, and ceremonies, will have announced the victory of the Protestants. The history of manners is thus seen to be involved in the history of events; these cause the others, and the description explains the narrative.

It is not enough to see causes; we must also see many. Every event has a multitude of them. Is it enough for me, if I wish to understand the action of Marlborough or of James, to be reminded of a disposition or a quality which explains it? No; for, since it has for a cause a whole situation and a whole character, I must see at one glance and in abstract the whole character and situation which have produced it. Genius concentrates. It is measured by the number of recollections and ideas which it assembles in one point. That which Macaulay has assembled, is enormous. I know no historian who has a surer, better furnished, better regulated memory. When he is relating the actions of a man or a party, he sees in an instant all the events of his history, and all the maxims of his conduct; he has all the details present; he remembers them every moment, in great numbers. He has forgotten nothing; he runs through them as easily, as completely, as surely, as on the day when he enumerated or wrote them. No one has so well taught or known history. He is as much steeped in it as his personages. The ardent Whig or Tory, experienced, trained to business, who rose and shook the House, had not more numerous, better arranged, more precise arguments. He did not better know the strength and weakness of his cause; he was not more familiar with the intrigues, rancours, variation of parties, the chances of the strife, individual and public interests. The great novelists penetrate the soul of their characters, assume their feelings, ideas, language; it seems as if Balzac had been a commercial traveller, a porter, a courtesan, a prude, a poet, and that he had spent his life in being each of these personages: his existence is multiplied, and his name is legion. With a different talent, Macaulay has the same

power: an incomparable advocate, he pleads an infinite number of causes; and he is master of each cause, as fully as his client. He has answers for all objections, explanations for all obscurities, reasons for all tribunals. He is ready at every moment, and on all parts of his case. It seems as if he had been Whig, Tory, Puritan, Member of the Privy Council, Ambassador. He is not a poet like Michelet; he is not a philosopher like Guizot; but he possesses so well all the oratorical powers, he accumulates and arranges so many facts, he holds them so closely in his hand, he manages them with so much ease and vigour, that he succeeds in recomposing the whole and harmonious woof of history, not losing or separating one thread. The poet reanimates the dead; the philosopher formulates creative laws; the orator knows, expounds, and pleads causes. The poet resuscitates souls, the philosopher composes a system, the orator redisposes chains of arguments; but all three march towards the same end by different routes, and the orator, like his rivals, and by other means than his rivals, reproduces in his work the unity and complexity of life.

A second character of this history is clearness. It is popular; no one explains better, or so much, as Macaulay. It seems as if he were making a wager with his reader, and said to him: Be as absent in mind, as stupid, as ignorant as you please; in vain you will be absent in mind, you shall listen to me; in vain you will be stupid, you shall understand; in vain you will be ignorant, you shall learn. I will repeat the same idea in so many different forms. I will make it sensible by such familiar and precise examples, I will announce it so clearly at the beginning, I will resume it so carefully at the end, I will mark the divisions so well, follow the order of ideas so exactly, I will display so great a desire to enlighten and convince you, that you cannot help being enlightened and convinced. He certainly thought thus, when he was preparing the following passage on the law which, for the first time, granted to Dissenters the liberty of exercising their worship:

'Of all the Acts that have ever been passed by Parliament, the Toleration Act is perhaps that which most strikingly illustrates the peculiar vices and the peculiar excellences of English legislation. The science of Politics bears in one respect a close analogy to the science of Mechanics. The mathematician can easily demonstrate that a certain power, applied by means of a certain lever or of a certain system of pulleys, will suffice to raise a certain weight. But his demonstration proceeds on the supposition that the machinery is such as no load will bend or break. If the engineer, who has to lift a great mass of real granite by the instrumentality of real timber and real hemp, should absolutely rely on the propositions which he finds in treatises on Dynamics, and should make no allowance for the imperfection of his materials, his whole apparatus of beams, wheels, and ropes would soon come down in ruin, and, with all his geometrical skill, he would be found a far inferior builder to those painted barbarians who, though they never heard of the parallelogram of forces, managed to pile up Stonehenge. What the engineer is to the mathematician, the active statesman is to the contemplative statesman. It is indeed most important that legislators and administrators should be versed in the philosophy

of government, as it is most important that the architect, who has to fix an obelisk on its pedestal, or to hang a tubular bridge over an estuary, should be versed in the philosophy of equilibrium and motion. But, as he who has actually to build must bear in mind many things never noticed by D'Alembert and Euler, so must he who has actually to govern be perpetually guided by considerations to which no allusion can be found in the writings of Adam Smith or Jeremy Bentham. The perfect lawgiver is a just temper between the mere man of theory, who can see nothing but general principles, and the mere man of business, who can see nothing but particular circumstances. Of lawgivers in whom the speculative element has prevailed to the exclusion of the practical, the world has during the last eighty years been singularly fruitful. To their wisdom Europe and America have owed scores of abortive constitutions, scores of constitutions which have lived just long enough to make a miserable noise, and have then gone off in convulsions. But in English legislation the practical element has always predominated, and not seldom unduly predominated, over the speculative. To think nothing of symmetry and much of convenience; never to remove an anomaly merely because it is an anomaly; never to innovate except when some grievance is felt; never to innovate except so far as to get rid of the grievance; never to lay down any proposition of wider extent than the particular case for which it is necessary to provide; these are the rules which have, from the age of John to the age of Victoria, generally guided the deliberations of our two hundred and fifty Parliaments.'[1]

Is the idea still obscure or doubtful? Does it still need proofs, illustrations? Do we wish for anything more? You answer No; Macaulay answers Yes. After the general explication comes the particular; after the theory, the application; after the theoretical demonstration, the practical. We would fain stop; but he proceeds:

'The Toleration Act approaches very near to the idea of a great English law. To a jurist, versed in the theory of legislation, but not intimately acquainted with the temper of the sects and parties into which the nation was divided at the time of the Revolution, that Act would seem to be a mere chaos of absurdities and contradictions. It will not bear to be tried by sound general principles. Nay, it will not bear to be tried by any principle, sound or unsound. The sound principle undoubtedly is, that mere theological error ought not to be punished by the civil magistrate. This principle the Toleration Act not only does not recognise, but positively disclaims. Not a single one of the cruel laws enacted against nonconformists by the Tudors or the Stuarts is repealed. Persecution continues to be the general rule. Toleration is the exception. Nor is this all. The freedom which is given to conscience is given in the most capricious manner. A Quaker, by making a declaration of faith in general terms, obtains the full benefit of the Act without signing one of the thirty-nine Articles. An Independent minister, who is perfectly willing to make the declaration required from the Quaker, but who has doubts about six or seven of the Articles, remains still subject to the penal laws. Howe is liable to punishment if he preaches before he has solemnly declared his assent to the Anglican doctrine touching the Eucharist. Penn, who altogether rejects the Eucharist, is at perfect liberty to preach without making any declaration whatever on the subject.

'These are some of the obvious faults which must strike every person who exa-

[1] Macaulay, ii. 463, *History of England*, ch. xi.

mines the Toleration Act by that standard of just reason which is the same in all countries and in all ages. But these very faults may perhaps appear to be merits, when we take into consideration the passions and prejudices of those for whom the Toleration Act was framed. This law, abounding with contradictions which every smatterer in political philosophy can detect, did what a law framed by the utmost skill of the greatest masters of political philosophy might have failed to do. That the provisions which have been recapitulated are cumbrous, puerile, inconsistent with each other, inconsistent with the true theory of religious liberty, must be acknowledged. All that can be said in their defence is this; that they removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice; that they put an end, at once and for ever, without one division in either House of Parliament, without one riot in the streets, with scarcely one audible murmur even from the classes most deeply tainted with bigotry, to a persecution which had raged during four generations, which had broken innumerable hearts, which had made innumerable firesides desolate, which had filled the prisons with men of whom the world was not worthy, which had driven thousands of those honest, diligent, and godfearing yeomen and artisans, who are the true strength of a nation, to seek a refuge beyond the ocean among the wigwams of red Indians and the lairs of panthers. Such a defence, however weak it may appear to some shallow speculators, will probably be thought complete by statesmen.'[1]

For my part, that which I find complete in this, is the art of development. This antithesis of ideas, sustained by the antithesis of words, the symmetrical periods, the expressions designedly repeated to attract the attention, the exhaustion of proof, set before our eyes the special-pleader's and oratorical talent, which we just before encountered in the art of pleading all causes, of employing an infinite number of methods, of mastering them all and always, during every incident of the lawsuit. The final manifestation of a mind of this sort are the faults into which its talent draws it. By dint of development, he protracts. More than once his explications are commonplace. He proves what all allow. He enlightens what is light. There is a passage on the necessity of reactions which reads like the verbosity of a clever schoolboy. Others, excellent and novel, can only be read with pleasure once. On the second reading they appear too true; we have seen it all at a glance, and are wearied. I have omitted one-third of the passage on the Act of Toleration, and acute minds will think that I ought to have omitted another third.

The last feature, the most singular, the least English of this History, is, that it is interesting. Macaulay wrote, in the *Edinburgh Review*, several volumes of Essays; and every one knows that the first merit of a reviewer or a journalist, is to make himself readable. A thick volume naturally bores us; it is not thick for nothing; its bulk demands at the outset the attention of him who opens it. The solid binding, the table of contents, the preface, the substantial chapters, drawn up like soldiers in battle-array, all bid us take an arm-chair, put on a dressing-gown, place our feet on the bars, and study; we owe no less to the grave man who presents himself to us, armed with 600 pages of text

[1] Macaulay, ii. 465, *History of England*, ch. xi.

and three years of reflection. But a newspaper which we glance at in a club, a review which we finger in a drawing-room in the evening, before sitting down to dinner, must needs attract the eyes, overcome absence of mind, conquer newspaper readers. Macaulay attained, through practice, this gift of readableness, and he retains in his History the habits which he had acquired in the newspapers. He employs every means of keeping up attention, good or indifferent, worthy or unworthy of a great talent; amongst others, allusion to actual circumstances. You may have heard the saying of an editor, to whom Pierre Leroux offered an article on God. 'God! there is no actuality about it!' Macaulay profits by this remark. He never forgets the actual. If he mentions a regiment, he points out in a few lines the splendid deeds which it has done since its formation up to our own day: thus the officers of this regiment, encamped in the Crimea, stationed at Malta, or at Calcutta, are obliged to read his History. He relates the reception of Schomberg in the House: who is interested in Schomberg? Forthwith he adds that Wellington, a hundred years later, was received, under like circumstances, with a ceremony copied from the first: what Englishman is not interested in Wellington? He relates the siege of Londonderry, he points out the spot which the ancient bastions occupy in the present town, the field which was covered by the Irish camp, the well at which the besiegers drank: what citizen of Londonderry can help buying his book? Whatever town he comes upon, he notes the changes which it has undergone, the new streets added, the buildings repaired or constructed, the increase of commerce, the introduction of new industries: hence all the aldermen and merchants are constrained to subscribe to his work. Elsewhere we find an anecdote of an actor and actress: as the superlative degree is interesting, he begins by saying that William Mountford was the most agreeable comedian, that Anne Bracegirdle was the most popular actress, of the time. If he introduces a statesman, he always announces him by some great word: he was the most insinuating, or the most equitable, or the best informed, or the most eager and the most debauched, of all the politicians of the day. But his great qualities serve him as well in this matter as his literary machinery, a little too manifest, a little too copious, a little too coarse. The astonishing number of details, the medley of psychological and moral dissertations, descriptions, relations, opinions, pleadings, portraits, beyond all, good composition and the continuous stream of eloquence, seize and retain the attention to the end. We have hard work to finish a volume of Lingard or Robertson; we should have hard work not to finish a volume of Macaulay

Here is a detached narration which shows very well, and in the abstract, the means of interesting which he employs, and the great interest which he excites. The subject is the Massacre of Glencoe. Macaulay begins by describing the spot like a traveller who has seen it, and points it out to the bands of tourists and dilettanti, historians and antiquarians, who yearly issue from London:

'Mac Ian dwelt in the mouth of a ravine situated not far from the southern shore of Loch Levin, an arm of the sea which deeply indents the western coast of Scotland, and separates Argyleshire from Inverness-shire. Near his house were two or three small hamlets inhabited by his tribe. The whole population which he governed was not supposed to exceed two hundred souls. In the neighbourhood of the little cluster of villages was some copsewood and some pasture land: but a little further up the defile no sign of population or of fruitfulness was to be seen. In the Gaelic tongue, Glencoe signifies the Glen of Weeping: and, in truth, that pass is the most dreary and melancholy of all the Scottish passes, the very Valley of the Shadow of Death. Mists and storms brood over it through the greater part of the finest summer; and even on those rare days when the sun is bright, and when there is no cloud in the sky, the impression made by the landscape is sad and awful. The path lies along a stream which issues from the most sullen and gloomy of mountain pools. Huge precipices of naked stone frown on both sides. Even in July the streaks of snow may often be discerned in the rifts near the summits. All down the sides of the crags heaps of ruin mark the headlong paths of the torrents. Mile after mile the traveller looks in vain for the smoke of one hut, or for one human form wrapped in a plaid, and listens in vain for the bark of a shepherd's dog or the bleat of a lamb. Mile after mile the only sound that indicates life is the faint cry of a bird of prey from some stormbeaten pinnacle of rock. The progress of civilisation, which has turned so many wastes into fields yellow with harvests or gay with apple blossoms, has only made Glencoe more desolate. All the science and industry of a peaceful age can extract nothing valuable from that wilderness: but, in an age of violence and rapine, the wilderness itself was valued on account of the shelter which it afforded to the plunderer and his plunder.'[1]

The description, though very beautiful, is written for a demonstration. The final antithesis explains it; the author has made it to show that the Campbells were the greatest brigands of the country.

The Master of Stair, who represented William in Scotland, relying on the fact that Mac Ian had not taken the oath of allegiance on the appointed day, determined to destroy the chief and his clan. He was not urged by hereditary hate nor by private interest; he was a man of taste, polished and amiable. He did this crime out of humanity, persuaded that there was no other way of pacifying the Highlands. Thereupon Macaulay inserts a dissertation of four pages, very well written, full of interest and knowledge, whose diversity affords us rest, which leads us over all kinds of historical examples, and moral lessons:

'We daily see men do for their party, for their sect, for their country, for their favourite schemes of political and social reform, what they would not do to enrich or to avenge themselves. At a temptation directly addressed to our private cupidity or to our private animosity, whatever virtue we have takes the alarm. But virtue itself may contribute to the fall of him who imagines that it is in his power, by violating some general rule of morality, to confer an important benefit on a church, on a commonwealth, on mankind. He silences the remonstrances of conscience, and hardens his heart against the most touching spectacles of misery, by repeating to himself that his intentions are pure, that his objects are noble,

[1] Macaulay, iii. 513; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

that he is doing a little evil for the sake of a great good. By degrees he comes altogether to forget the turpitude of the means in the excellence of the end, and at length perpetrates without one internal twinge acts which would shock a buccaneer. There is no reason to believe that Dominic would, for the best archbishopric in Christendom, have incited ferocious marauders to plunder and slaughter a peaceful and industrious population, that Everard Digby would, for a dukedom, have blown a large assembly of people into the air, or that Robespierre would have murdered for hire one of the thousands whom he murdered from philanthropy.'[1]

Do we not recognise here the Englishman brought up on psychological and moral essays and sermons, who involuntarily and every instant spreads one over the paper? This species is unknown in French lecture-rooms and reviews; this is why it is unknown in French histories. When we wish to enter English history, we have only to step down from the pulpit and the newspaper.

I do not transcribe the sequel of the explanation, the examples of James v., Sixtus v., and so many others, whom Macaulay cites to find precedents for the Master of Stair. Then follows a very circumstantial and very solid discussion, to prove that William was not responsible for the massacre. It is clear that Macaulay's object, here as elsewhere, is less to draw a picture than to suggest a judgment. He desires that we should have an opinion on the morality of the act, that we should attribute it to its real authors, that each should bear exactly his own share, and no more. A little further, when the question of the punishment of the crime arises, and William, having severely chastised the executioners, contents himself with recalling the Master of Stair, Macaulay writes a dissertation of several pages to consider this injustice and to blame the king. Here, as elsewhere, he is still the orator and the moralist; no means has more power to interest an English reader. Happily for us, he at length becomes once more a narrator; the petty details which he then selects fix the attention, and place the scene before our eyes:

'The sight of the red coats approaching caused some anxiety among the population of the valley. John, the eldest son of the Chief, came, accompanied by twenty clansmen, to meet the strangers, and asked what this visit meant. Lieutenant Lindsay answered that the soldiers came as friends, and wanted nothing but quarters. They were kindly received, and were lodged under the thatched roofs of the little community. Glenlyon and several of his men were taken into the house of a tacksman who was named from the cluster of cabins over which he exercised authority, Inverriggen. Lindsay was accommodated nearer to the abode of the old chief. Auchintriater, one of the principal men of the clan, who governed the small hamlet of Auchnaion, found room there for a party commanded by a serjeant named Barbour. Provisions were liberally supplied. There was no want of beef, which had probably fattened in distant pastures: nor was any payment demanded: for in hospitality, as in thievery, the Gaelic marauders rivalled the Bedouins. During twelve days the soldiers

[1] Macaulay, iii. 519; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

lived familiarly with the people of the glen. Old Mac Ian, who had before felt many misgivings as to the relation in which he stood to the government, seems to have been pleased with the visit. The officers passed much of their time with him and his family. The long evenings were cheerfully spent by the peat fire with the help of some packs of cards which had found their way to that remote corner of the world, and of some French brandy which was probably part of James' farewell gift to his Highland supporters. Glenlyon appeared to be warmly attached to his niece and her husband Alexander. Every day he came to their house to take his morning draught. Meanwhile he observed with minute attention all the avenues by which, when the signal for the slaughter should be given, the Macdonalds might attempt to escape to the hills; and he reported the result of his observations to Hamilton. . . .

'The night was rough. Hamilton and his troops made slow progress, and were long after their time. While they were contending with the wind and snow, Glenlyon was supping and playing at cards with those whom he meant to butcher before daybreak. He and Lieutenant Lindsay had engaged themselves to dine with the old Chief on the morrow.

'Late in the evening a vague suspicion that some evil was intended crossed the mind of the Chief's eldest son. The soldiers were evidently in a restless state; and some of them uttered strange exclamations. Two men, it is said, were overheard whispering. "I do not like this job," one of them muttered; "I should be glad to fight the Macdonalds. But to kill men in their beds—" "We must do as we are bid," answered another voice. "If there is anything wrong, our officers must answer for it." John Macdonald was so uneasy, that, soon after midnight, he went to Glenlyon's quarters. Glenlyon and his men were all up, and seemed to be getting their arms ready for action. John, much alarmed, asked what these preparations meant. Glenlyon was profuse of friendly assurances. "Some of Glengarry's people have been harrying the country. We are getting ready to march against them. You are quite safe. Do you think that, if you were in any danger, I should not have given a hint to your brother Sandy and his wife?" John's suspicions were quieted. He returned to his house, and lay down to rest.'[1]

On the next day, at five in the morning, the old chieftain was assassinated, his men shot in their beds or by the fireside. Women were butchered; a boy, twelve years old, who begged his life on his knees, was slain; they who fled half-naked, women and children, died of cold and hunger in the snow.

These precise details, these soldiers' conversations, this picture of evenings by the fireside, give to history the animation and life of a novel. And still the historian remains an orator: for he has chosen all these facts to exhibit the perfidy of the assassins and the horrible nature of the massacre; and he will make use of them later on, to demand, with all the power and passion of logic, the punishment of the criminals.

VIII.

Thus this History, whose qualities seem so little English, bears throughout the mark of a genuinely English talent. Universal, con-

[1] Macaulay, iii. 526; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

nected, it embraces all the facts in its vast, undivided, and unbroken woof. Developed, abundant, it enlightens obscure facts, and opens to the most ignorant the most complicated questions. Interesting, varied, it attracts and preserves the attention. It has life, clearness, unity, qualities which appear to be wholly French. It seems as if the author were a populariser like Thiers, a philosopher like Guizot, an artist like Thierry. The truth is, that he is an orator, and that after the fashion of his country; but, as he possesses in the highest degree the oratorical faculties, and possesses them with a national tendency and instincts, he seems to supplement through them the faculties which he has not. He is not genuinely philosophical: the mediocrity of his earlier chapters on the ancient history of England proves this sufficiently; but his force of reasoning, his habits of classification and order, bestow unity upon his History. He is not a genuine artist: when he draws a picture, he is always thinking of proving something; he inserts dissertations in the most interesting and touching places; he has neither grace, lightness, vivacity, nor refinement, but a marvellous memory, vast knowledge, an ardent political passion, a great legal talent for expounding and pleading every cause, a precise knowledge of precise and petty facts which rivet the attention, charm, diversify, animate, and warm a narrative. He is not simply a populariser; he is too ardent, too eager to prove, to conquer belief, to beat down his foes, to have only the limpid talent of a man who explains and expounds, with no other end than to explain and expound, which spreads light throughout, and never spreads heat; but he is so well provided with details and reasons, so anxious to convince, so rich in developments, that he cannot fail to be popular. By this breadth of knowledge, this power of reasoning and passion, he has produced one of the finest books of the age, whilst manifesting the genius of his nation. This solidity, this energy, this deep political passion, these moral prejudices, these oratorical habits, this limited philosophical power, this partially uniform style, without flexibility or sweetness, this eternal gravity, this geometrical progress to a settled end, announce in him the English mind. But if he is English to the French, he is not so to his nation. The animation, interest, clearness, unity of his narrative, astonish them. They think him brilliant, rapid, bold; it is, they say, a French mind Doubtless he is so in many respects: if he understands Racine badly, he admires Pascal and Bossuet; his friends say that he used daily to read Madame de Sévigné. Nay more, by the structure of his mind, by his eloquence and rhetoric, he is Latin; so that the inner structure of his talent places him amongst the classics: it is only by his lively appreciation of special, complex, and sensible facts, by his energy and rudeness, by the rather heavy richness of his imagination, by the depth of his colouring, that he belongs to his race. Like Addison and Burke, he resembles a strange graft, fed and transformed by the sap of the national stock. At all events, this judgment is

the strongest mark of the difference between the two nations. To reach the English intellect, a Frenchman must make two voyages. When he has crossed the first interval, which is wide, he comes upon Macaulay. Let him re-embark; he must accomplish a second passage, just as long, to arrive at Carlyle for instance,—a mind fundamentally Germanic, on the genuine English soil.

CHAPTER IV.

Philosophy and History.—Carlyle

§ 1.—Style and Mind.

ECCENTRIC AND IMPORTANT POSITION OF CARLYLE IN ENGLAND.

I. His strangenesses, obscurities, violence—Fancy and enthusiasm—Rudeness and buffooneries.

II. Humour—Wherein it consists—It is Germanic—Grotesque and tragic pictures—Dandies and Poor Slaves—The Pigs' Catechism—Extreme tension of his mind and nerves.

III. Barriers which hold and direct him—Perception of the real and of the sublime.

IV. His passion for exact and demonstrated fact—His search after extinguished feelings—Vehemence of his emotion and sympathy—Intensity of belief and vision—*Past and Present*—*Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*—Historical mysticism—Grandeur and sadness of his visions—How he represents the world after his own mind.

V. Every object is a group, and every employment of human thought is the reproduction of a group—Two principal modes of reproducing it, and two principal modes of mind—Classification—Intuition—Inconvenience of the second process—It is obscure, hazardous, destitute of proofs—It tends to affectation and exaggeration—Hardness and presumption which it provokes—Advantages of this kind of mind—Alone capable of reproducing the object—Most favourable to original invention—The use made of it by Carlyle.

§ 2.—Vocation.

INTRODUCTION OF GERMAN IDEAS IN EUROPE AND ENGLAND—GERMAN STUDIES OF CARLYLE.

I. Appearance of original forms of mind—How they act and result—Artistic genius of the Renaissance—Oratorical genius of the classic age—Philosophical genius of the modern age—Probable analogy of the three ages.

II. Wherein consists the modern and German form of mind—How the aptitude for universal ideas has renewed the science of language, mythology, æsthetics, history, exegesis, theology, and metaphysics—How the metaphysical bent has transformed poetry.

III. Capital idea derived thence—Conception of essential and complementary parts—New conception of nature and man.

IV. Inconvenience of this aptitude—Gratuitous hypothesis and vague abstraction—Transient discredit of German speculations.

V. How each nation may re-forge them—Ancient examples: Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—The Puritans and Jansenists in the

seventeenth century—France in the eighteenth century—By what roads these ideas may enter France—Positivism—Criticism.

VI. By what roads these ideas may enter England—Exact and positive mind—Impassioned and poetic inspiration—Road followed by Carlyle.

§ 3.—Philosophy, Morality, and Criticism.

HIS METHOD IS MORAL, NOT SCIENTIFIC—WHEREIN HE RESEMBLES THE PURITANS—SARTOR RESARTUS.

I. Sensible things are but appearances—Divine and mysterious character of existence—His metaphysics.

II. How we may form into one another, positive, poetic, spiritualistic, and mystical ideas—How in Carlyle German metaphysics are altered into English Puritanism.

III. Moral character of this mysticism—Conception of duty—Conception of God.

IV. Conception of Christianity—Genuine and conventional Christianity—Other religions—Limit and scope of doctrine.

V. Criticism—What weight it gives to writers—What class of writers it exalts—What class of writers it depreciates—His æsthetics—His judgment of Voltaire.

VI. Future of criticism—Wherein it is contrary to the prejudices of the age and of its vocation—Taste has but a relative authority.

§ 4.—Conception of History.

I. Supreme importance of great men—They are revealers—They must be venerated.

II. Connection between this and the German conception—Wherein Carlyle is imitative—Wherein he is original—Scope of his conception.

III. How genuine history is that of heroic sentiments—Genuine historians are artists and psychologists.

IV. His history of Cromwell—Why it is only composed of texts connected by a commentary—Its novelty and worth—How we should consider Cromwell and the Puritans—Importance of Puritanism in modern civilisation—Carlyle admires it unreservedly.

V. His history of the French Revolution—Severity of his judgment—Wherein he has sight of the truth, and wherein he is unjust.

VI. His judgment of modern England—Against the taste for comfort and the lukewarmness of convictions—Gloomy forebodings for the future of modern democracy—Against the authority of votes—Monarchical theory.

VII. Criticism of these theories—Dangers of enthusiasm—Comparison of Carlyle and Macaulay.

WHEN you ask Englishmen, especially those under forty, who amongst them are the thinking men, they first mention Carlyle; but at the same time they advise you not to read him, warning you that you will not understand him at all. Then, of course, we hasten to get the twenty volumes of Carlyle—criticism, history, pamphlets, fantasies, philosophy; we read them with very strange emotions, contradicting every morning our opinion of the night before.

We discover at last that we are in presence of an extraordinary animal, a relic of a lost family, a sort of mastodon, lost in a world, not made for him. We rejoice in this zoological good luck, and dissect him with minute curiosity, telling ourselves that we shall probably never find another animal like him.

§ 1.—Style and Mind.

We are at first put out. All is new here—ideas, style, tone, the shape of the phrases, and the very vocabulary. He takes everything in a contrary meaning, does violence to everything, expressions and things. With him paradoxes are set down for principles; common sense takes the form of absurdity. We are, as it were, carried into an unknown world, whose inhabitants walk head downwards, feet in the air, dressed in motley, as great lords and maniacs, with contortions, jerks, and cries; we are grievously stunned by these extravagant and discordant sounds; we want to stop our ears, we have a headache, we are obliged to decipher a new language. We see upon the table volumes which ought to be as clear as possible—*The History of the French Revolution*, for instance; and there we read these headings to the chapters: 'Realised Ideals—Viaticum—Astræa Redux—Petition in Hieroglyphs—Windbags—Mercury de Brézé—Broglie the War-God.' We ask ourselves what connection there can be between these riddles and such simple events as we all know. We then perceive that Carlyle always speaks in riddles. 'Logic-choppers' is the name he gives to the analysts of the eighteenth century; 'Beaver science' is his word for the catalogues and classifications of our modern men of science. 'Transcendental moonshine' signifies the philosophical and sentimental dreams imported from Germany. The religion of the 'rotatory calabash' means external and mechanical religion.[1] He cannot be contented with a simple expression; he employs figures at every step; he embodies all his ideas; he must touch forms. We see that he is besieged and haunted by sparkling or gloomy visions; every thought with him is a shock; a stream of misty passion comes bubbling into his overflowing brain, and the torrent of images breaks forth and rolls on amidst every kind of mud and magnificence. He cannot reason, he must paint. If he wants to explain the embarrassment of a young man obliged to choose a career amongst the lusts and doubts of the age, in which we live, he tells you of:

'A world all rocking and plunging, like that old Roman one when the measure of its iniquities was full; the abysses, and subterranean and supernal deluges, plainly broken loose; in the wild dim-lighted chaos all stars of Heaven gone out. No star of Heaven visible, hardly now to any man; the pestiferous fogs and foul exhalations grown continual, have, except on the highest mountain-tops, blotted

[1] Because the Kalmucks put written prayers into a calabash turned by the wind, which in their opinion produces a perpetual adoration. In the same way are the prayer-mills of Thibet used.

out all stars: will-o-wisps, of various course and colour, take the place of stars Over the wild surging chaos, in the leaden air, are only sudden glares of revolutionary lightning; then mere darkness, with philanthropistic phosphorescences, empty meteoric lights; here and there an ecclesiastical luminary still hovering, hanging on to its old quaking fixtures, pretending still to be a Moon or Sun,—though visibly it is but a Chinese Lantern made of *paper* mainly, with candle-end foully dying in the heart of it.'[1]

Imagine a volume, twenty volumes, made up of such pictures, united by exclamations and apostrophes; even history—that of the *French Revolution*—is like a delirium. Carlyle is a Puritan seer, before whose eyes pass scaffolds, orgies, massacres, battles, and who, besieged by furious or bloody phantoms, prophesies, encourages, or curses. If you do not throw down the book from anger or weariness, you will lose your judgment; your ideas depart, nightmare seizes you, a medley of contracted and ferocious figures whirl about in your head; you hear the howls of insurrection, cries of war; you are sick; you are like those listeners to the Covenanters, whom the preaching filled with disgust or enthusiasm, and who broke the head of their prophet, if they did not take him for their leader.

These violent outbursts will seem to you still more violent if you mark the breadth of the field which they traverse. From the sublime to the ignoble, from the pathetic to the grotesque, is but a step with Carlyle. With the same stroke he touches the two extremes. His adorations end in sarcasms. The Universe is for him an oracle and a temple, as well as a kitchen and a stable. He moves freely about, and is at his ease in mysticism, as well as in brutality. Speaking of the setting sun at the North Cape, he writes:

'Silence as of death; for Midnight, even in the Arctic latitudes, has its character: nothing but the granite cliffs ruddy-tinged, the peaceable gurgle of that slow-heaving Polar Ocean, over which in the utmost North the great Sun hangs low and lazy, as if he too were slumbering. Yet is his cloud-couch wrought of crimson and cloth-of-gold; yet does his light stream over the mirror of waters, like a tremulous fire-pillar, shooting downwards to the abyss, and hide itself under my feet. In such moments, Solitude also is invaluable; for who would speak, or be looked on, when behind him lies all Europe and Africa, fast asleep, except the watchmen; and before him the silent Immensity, and Palace of the Eternal, whereof our Sun is but a porch-lamp?'[2]

Such splendours he sees whenever he is face to face with nature. No one has contemplated with a more powerful emotion the silent stars which roll eternally in the pale firmament and envelop our little world. No one has contemplated with more of religious awe the infinite obscurity in which our slender thought appears for an instant like a gleam, and by our side the gloomy abyss in which the hot frenzy of life is to be extinguished. His eyes are habitually fixed on this

[1] The *Life of John Sterling*, ch. v.; *A Profession*.

[2] *Sartor Resartus*, 1868, bk. ii. ch. viii.; *Centre of Indifference*.

vast Darkness, and he paints with a shudder of veneration and hop the effort which religions have made to pierce them:

'In the heart of the remotest mountains rises the little Kirk; the Dead all slumbering round it, under their white memorial stones, "in hope of a happy resurrection:"—dull wert thou, O Reader, if never in any hour (say of moaning midnight, when such Kirk hung spectral in the sky, and Being was as if swallowed up of Darkness) it spoke to thee—things unspeakable, that went to thy soul's soul. Strong was he that had a Church, what we can call a Church: he stood thereby, though "in the centre of Immensities, in the conflux of Eternities," yet manlike towards God and man: the vague shoreless Universe had become for him a firm city, and dwelling which he knew.'[1]

Rembrandt alone has beheld these sombre visions drowned in shade, traversed by mystic rays: look, for example, at the church which he has painted; glance at the mysterious floating apparition, full of radiant forms, which he has set in the summit of the sky, above the stormy night and the terror which shakes mortality.[2] The two imaginations have the same painful grandeur, the same scintillations, the same agony, and both sink with like facility into triviality and crudity. No ulcer, no filth, is repulsive enough to disgust Carlyle. On occasion, he will compare the politician who seeks popularity to 'the dog that was drowned last summer, and that floats up and down the Thames with ebb and flood. . . . You get to know him by sight . . . with a painful oppression of nose . . . Daily you may see him, . . . and daily the odour of him is getting more intolerable.'[3] Absurdities, incongruities, abound in his style. When the frivolous Cardinal de Loménie proposed to convoke a Plenary Court, he compares him to 'trained canary birds, that would fly cheerfully with lighted matches and fire cannon; fire whole powder magazines.'[4] At need, he turns to clownish images. He ends a dithyramb with a caricature: he bespatters magnificence with wild fooleries: he couples poetry with rude jests:

'The Genius of England no longer soars Sunward, world defiant, like an Eagle through the storms, "mewing her mighty youth," as John Milton saw her do: the Genius of England, much liker a greedy Ostrich intent on provender and a whole skin mainly, stands with its *other* extremity Sunward; with its Ostrich-head stuck into the readiest bush, of old Church-tippets, King-cloaks, or what other "sheltering Fallacy" there may be, and *so* awaits the issue. The issue has been slow; but it is now seen to have been inevitable. No Ostrich, intent on gross terrene provender, and sticking its head into Fallacies, but will be awakened one day,—in a terrible *à-posteriori* manner, if not otherwise!'[5]

With such buffoonery he concludes his best book, never quitting his tone of gravity and gloom, in the midst of anathemas and prophecies.

[1] *History of the French Revolution*, bk. i. ch. ii.; *Realized Ideals.* In the *Adoration of the Magi.*

[2] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850; *Stump Orator*, 35.

[3] *The French Revolution*, i. bk. iii. ch. vii.; *Internecine.*

[4] *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. x.; the end.

He needs these great shocks. He cannot remain quiet, or stick to one literary province at a time. He leaps in unimpeded jerks from one end of the field of ideas to the other; he confounds all styles, jumbles all forms, heaps together pagan allusions, Bible reminiscences, German abstractions, technical terms, poetry, slang, mathematics, physiology, archaic words, neologies. There is nothing he does not tread down and ravage. The symmetrical constructions of human art and thought, dispersed and upset, are piled under his hands into a vast mass of shapeless ruins, from the top of which he gesticulates and fights, like a conquering savage.

II.

This kind of mind produces humour, a word untranslateable in French, because in France they have not the idea. Humour is a species of talent which amuses Germans, Northmen; it suits their mind, as beer suits their palate. For men of another race it is disagreeable; they often find it too harsh and bitter. Amongst other things, this talent embraces a taste for contrasts. Swift jokes with the serious mien of an ecclesiastic, performing religious rites, and develops the most grotesque absurdities, like a convinced man. Hamlet, shaken with terror and despair, bristles with buffooneries. Heine mocks his own emotions, even whilst he displays them. These men love travesties, put a solemn garb over comic ideas, a clown's jacket over grave ones. Another feature of humour is that the author forgets the public for whom he writes. He declares that he does not care for it, that he needs neither to be understood nor approved, that he thinks and amuses himself by himself, and that if his taste and ideas displease it it has only to disappear. He wishes to be refined and original at his ease; he is at home in his book, and with closed doors, he gets into his slippers, dressing-gown, often with his feet in the air, sometimes without a shirt. Carlyle has a style of his own, and marks his idea in his own fashion; it is our business to understand it. He alludes to a saying of Goethe, of Shakspeare, an anecdote which strikes him at the moment; so much the worse for us if we do not know it. He shouts when the fancy takes him; the worse for us if our ears do not like it. He writes on the caprice of his imagination, with all the starts of invention; the worse for us if our mind goes at a different pace. He catches on the wing all the shades, all the oddities of his conception; the worse for us if ours cannot reach them. A last feature of humour is the irruption of violent joviality, buried under a heap of sadnesses. Absurd indecency appears unannounced. Physical nature, hidden and oppressed under habits of melancholic reflection, is laid bare for an instant You see a grimace, a clown's gesture, then everything resumes its wonted gravity. Add lastly the unforeseen flashes of imagination. The humorist covers a poet; suddenly, in the monotonous mist of prose, at the end of an argument, a vista shines; beautiful or ugly, it matters

not; it is enough that it strikes our eyes. These inequalities fairly paint the solitary, energetic, imaginative German, a lover of violent contrasts, confirmed in personal and gloomy reflection, with sudden up-wellings of physical instinct, so different from the Latin and classical races, races of orators or artists, where they never write but with an eye to the public, where they relish only consequent ideas, are only happy in the spectacle of harmonious forms, where the fancy is regulated, and voluptuousness appears natural. Carlyle is profoundly German, nearer to the primitive stock than any of his contemporaries, strange and unexampled in his fancies and his pleasantries; he calls himself 'a bemired aurochs or uras of the German woods, . . . the poor wood-ox so bemired in the forests.'[1] For instance, his first book, *Sartor Resartus*, which is a clothes-philosophy, contains, *à propos* of aprons and breeches, a metaphysics, a politics, a psychology. Man, according to him, is a dressed animal. Society has clothes for its foundation. 'How, without Clothes, could we possess the master-organ, soul's seat, and true pineal gland of the Body Social: I mean, a PURSE:'[2]

'To the eye of vulgar Logic,' says he, 'what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches. To the eye of Pure Reason what is he? A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious ME, there lies, under all those wool-rags, a Garment of Flesh (or of Senses), contextured in the Loom of Heaven; whereby he is revealed to his like, and dwells with them in UNION and DIVISION; and sees and fashions for himself a Universe, with azure Starry Spaces, and long Thousands of Years. Deep-hidden is he under that strange Garment; amid Sounds and Colours and Forms, as it were, swathed-in, and inextricably over-shrouded: yet it is skywoven, and worthy of a God.'[3]

The paradox continues, at once irregular and mystical, hiding theories under follies, mixing together fierce ironies, tender pastorals, love-stories, explosions of rage, and carnival pictures. He says well:

'Perhaps the most remarkable incident in Modern History is not the Diet of Worms, still less the Battle of Austerlitz, Wagram, Waterloo, Peterloo, or any other Battle; but an incident passed carelessly over by most Historians, and treated with some degree of ridicule by others: namely, George Fox's making to himself a suit of Leather.'[4]

For, thus clothed for the rest of his life, lodging in a tree and eating wild berries, man could remain at peace and invent Puritanism, that is, CONSCIENCE-worship, at his leisure. This is how Carlyle treats the ideas which are dearest to him. He jests in connection with the doctrine, which was to employ his life and occupy his whole soul.

Would you like an abstract of his politics, and his opinion about his country? He proves that in the modern transformation of religions two principal sects have risen, especially in England; the one of 'Poor Slaves,' the other of Dandies. Of the first he says:

[1] *Life of Sterling.* [2] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. i.; *Incident in Modern History.*

'Something Monastic there appears to be in their Constitution: we find them bound by the two Monastic Vows, of Poverty and Obedience; which Vows, especially the former, it is said, they observe with great strictness; nay, as I have understood it, they are pledged, and be it by any solemn Nazarene ordination or not, irrevocably consecrated thereto, even *before* birth. That the third Monastic Vow, of Chastity, is rigidly enforced among them, I find no ground to conjecture.

'Furthermore, they appear to imitate the Dandiacal Sect in their grand principle of wearing a peculiar Costume. . . . Their raiment consists of innumerable skirts, lappets, and irregular wings, of all cloths and of all colours; through the labyrinthic intricacies of which their bodies are introduced by some unknown process. It is fastened together by a multiplex combination of buttons, thrums, and skewers; to which frequently is added a girdle of leather, of hempen or even of straw rope, round the loins. To straw rope, indeed, they seem partial, and often wear it by way of sandals. . . .

'One might fancy them worshippers of Hertha, or the Earth: for they dig and affectionately work continually in her bosom; or else, shut up in private Oratories, meditate and manipulate the substances derived from her; seldom looking-up towards the Heavenly Luminaries, and then with comparative indifference. Like the Druids, on the other hand, they live in dark dwellings; often even breaking their glass-windows, where they find such, and stuffing them up with pieces of raiment, or other opaque substances, till the fit obscurity is restored. . . .

'In respect of diet they have also their observances. All Poor Slaves are Rhizophagous (or Root-eaters); a few are Ichthyophagous, and use Salted Herrings: other animal food they abstain from; except indeed, with perhaps some strange inverted fragment of a Brahminical feeling, such animals as die a natural death. Their universal sustenance is the root named Potato, cooked by fire alone. . . . In all their Religious Solemnities, Potheen is said to be an indispensable requisite, and largely consumed.'[1]

Of the other sect he says:

'A certain touch of Manicheism, not indeed in the Gnostic shape, is discernible enough: also (for human Error walks in a cycle, and reappears at intervals) a not-inconsiderable resemblance to that Superstition of the Athos Monks, who by fasting from all nourishment, and looking intensely for a length of time into their own navels, came to discern therein the true Apocalypse of Nature, and Heaven Unveiled. To my own surmise, it appears as if this Dandiacal Sect were but a new modification, adapted to the new time, of that primeval Superstition, *Self-worship*. . . .

'They affect great purity and separatism; distinguish themselves by a particular costume (whereof some notices were given in the earlier part of this Volume); likewise, so far as possible, by a particular speech (apparently some broken *Lingua-franca*, or English-French); and, on the whole, strive to maintain a true Nazarene deportment, and keep themselves unspotted from the world.'

'They have their Temples, whereof the chief, as the Jewish Temple did, stands in their metropolis; and is named *Almack's*, a word of uncertain etymology. They worship principally by night; and have their Highpriests and Highpriestesses, who, however, do not continue for life. The rites, by some supposed to be of the Menadic sort, or perhaps with an Eleusinian or Cabiric character, are held strictly secret. Nor are Sacred Books wanting to the Sect; these they call *Fashionable Novels*: however, the Canon is not completed, and some are canonical and others not.'[2] . . .

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. x.; *The Dandiacal Body*. [2] *Ibid.*

Their chief articles of faith are:

'1. Coats should have nothing of the triangle about them; at the same time, wrinkles behind should be carefully avoided.

'2. The collar is a very important point: it should be low behind, and slightly rolled.

'3. No licence of fashion can allow a man of delicate taste to adopt the posterial luxuriance of a Hottentot.

'4. There is safety in a swallow-tail.

'5. The good sense of a gentleman is nowhere more finely developed than in his rings.

'6. It is permitted to mankind, under certain restrictions, to wear white waistcoats.

'7. The trousers must be exceedingly tight across the hips.

'All which Propositions I, for the present, content myself with modestly but peremptorily and irrevocably denying.'[1]

This premised, he draws conclusions:

'I might call them two boundless and indeed unexampled Electric Machines (turned by the "Machinery of Society"), with batteries of opposite quality; Drudgism the Negative, Dandyism the Positive: one attracts hourly towards it and appropriates all the Positive Electricity of the nation (namely, the Money thereof); the other is equally busy with the Negative (that is to say the Hunger), which is equally potent. Hitherto you see only partial transient sparkles and sputters: but wait a little, till the entire nation is in an electric state; till your whole vital Electricity, no longer healthfully Neutral, is cut into two isolated portions of Positive and Negative (of Money and of Hunger); and stands there bottled-up in two World-Batteries! The stirring of a child's finger brings the two together; and then—What then? The Earth is but shivered into impalpable smoke by that Doom's-thunderpeal: the Sun misses one of his Planets in Space, and thenceforth there are no eclipses of the Moon. Or better still, I might liken—'[2]

He stops suddenly, and leaves you to your conjectures. This bitter pleasantry is that of a furious or despairing man, who designedly, and simply by reason of his passion, would restrain it and force himself to laugh; but whom a sudden shudder at the end reveals just as he is. In one place Carlyle says that there is, at the bottom of the English character, under all its habits of calculation and coolness, an inextinguishable furnace:

'Deep hidden it lies, far down in the centre, like genial central fire, with stratum after stratum of arrangement, traditionary method, composed productiveness, all built above it, vivified and rendered fertile by it: justice, clearness, silence, perseverance unhasting, unresting diligence, hatred of disorder, hatred of injustice, which is the worst disorder, characterise this people: the inward fire we say, as all such fires would be, is hidden in the centre. Deep hidden, but awakenable, but immeasurable; let no man awaken it.'

It is a fire of extraordinary fierceness, as the rage of devoted Berserkirs, who, once rushing to the heat of the battle, felt no more their wounds, and

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. x.; *The Dandiacal Body*. [2] *Ibid.*

lived, fought, and killed, pierced with strokes, the least of which would have been mortal to an ordinary man. It is this destructive phrenzy this rousing of inward unknown powers, this loosening of a ferocity, enthusiasm, and imagination disordered and not to be bridled, which appeared in these men at the Renaissance and the Reformation, and a remnant of which still endures in Carlyle. Here is a vestige of it, in a passage almost worthy of Swift, which is the abstract of his customary emotions, and at the same time his conclusion on the age in which we live:

'Supposing swine (I mean four-footed swine), of sensibility and superior logical parts, had attained such culture; and could, after survey and reflection, jot down for us their notion of the Universe, and of their interests and duties there,—might it not well interest a discerning public, perhaps in unexpected ways, and give a stimulus to the languishing book-trade? The votes of all creatures, it is understood at present, ought to be had; that you may "legislate" for them with better insight. "How can you govern a thing," say many, "without first asking its vote?" Unless, indeed, you already chance to know its vote,—and even something more, namely, what you are to think of its vote: what *it* wants by its vote; and, still more important, what Nature wants,—which latter, at the end of the account, the only thing that will be got!— —Pig Propositions, in a rough form, are somewhat as follows:

'1. The Universe, so far as sane conjecture can go, is an immeasurable Swine's-trough, consisting of solid and liquid, and of other contrasts and kinds;—especially consisting of attainable and unattainable, the latter in immensely greater quantities for most pigs.

'2. Moral evil is unattainability of Pig's-wash; moral good, attainability of ditto.

'3. "What is Paradise, or the State of Innocence?" Paradise, called also State of Innocence, Age of Gold, and other names, *was* (according to Pigs of weak judgment) unlimited attainability of Pig's-wash; perfect fulfilment of one's wishes, so that the Pig's imagination could not outrun reality; a fable and an impossibility, as Pigs of sense now see.

'4. "Define the Whole Duty of Pigs." It is the mission of universal Pighood, and the duty of all Pigs, at all times, to diminish the quantity of unattainable and increase that of attainable. All knowledge and device and effort ought to be directed thither and thither only: Pig science, Pig enthusiasm and Devotion have this one aim. It is the Whole Duty of Pigs.

'5. Pig Poetry ought to consist of universal recognition of the excellence of Pig's-wash and ground barley, and the felicity of Pigs whose trough is in order, and who have had enough: Hrumph!

'6. The Pig knows the weather; he ought to look out what kind of weather it will be.

'7. "Who made the Pig?" Unknown;—perhaps the Pork-butcher.

'8. "Have you Law and Justice in Pigdom?" Pigs of observation have discerned that there is, or was once supposed to be, a thing called justice. Undeniably at least there is a sentiment in Pig-nature called indignation, revenge, etc., which, if one Pig provoke another, comes out in a more or less destructive manner: hence laws are necessary, amazing quantities of laws. For quarrelling is attended with loss of blood, of life, at any rate with frightful effusion of the general stock of Hog's-wash, and ruin (temporary ruin) to large sections of the

universal Swine's trough: wherefore let justice be observed, that so quarrelling be avoided.

'9. "What is justice?" Your own share of the general Swine's trough, not any portion of my share.

'10. "But what is 'my' share?" Ah! there, in fact, lies the grand difficulty; upon which Pig science, meditating this long while, can settle absolutely nothing. My share—hrumph!—my share is, on the whole, whatever I can contrive to get without being hanged or sent to the hulks.'[1]

Such is the mire in which he plunges modern life, and, beyond all others, English life; drowning with the same stroke, and in the same filth, the positive mind, the love of comfort, industrial science, Church, State, philosophy, and law. This cynical catechism, thrown in amidst furious declamations, gives, I think, the dominant note of this strange mind: it is this mad tension which constitutes his talent; which produces and explains his images and incongruities, his laughter and his rages. There is an English expression which cannot be translated into French, but which depicts this condition, and illustrates the whole physical constitution of the race: *His blood is up.* In fact, the cold and phlegmatic temperament covers the surface; but when the roused blood has swept through the veins, the fevered animal can only be glutted by devastation, and only be satiated by excess.

III.

It seems as though a soul so violent, so enthusiastic, so savage, so abandoned to imaginative follies, so void of taste, order, and measure, would be capable only of rambling, and expending itself in hallucinations, full of gloom and danger. In fact, many of those who have had this temperament, and who were his genuine forefathers—the Norse pirates, the poets of the sixteenth century, the Puritans of the seventeenth—were madmen, pernicious to others and themselves, bent on devastating things and ideas, destroying the public security and their own heart. Two entirely English barriers have restrained and directed Carlyle: the sentiment of actuality, which is the positive spirit, and of the sublime, which makes the religious spirit; the first has turned him to real things, the other has furnished him with the interpretation of real things: instead of being sickly and visionary, he has become a philosopher and a historian.

IV.

We must read his history of Cromwell to understand how far this sentiment of actuality penetrates him; with what knowledge it endows him; how he rectifies dates and texts; how he verifies traditions and genealogies; how he visits places, examines the trees, looks at the brooks, knows the agriculture, prices, the whole domestic and rural economy, all the political and literary circumstances; with what minute-

[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850; *Jesuitism*, 28.

ness, precision, and vehemence he reconstructs before his eyes and before our own the external picture of objects and affairs, the internal picture of ideas and emotions. And it is not simply on his part conscience, habit, or prudence, but need and passion. In this great obscure void of the past, his eyes fix upon the rare luminous points as on a treasure. The black sea of oblivion has swallowed up the rest: the million thoughts and actions of so many million beings have disappeared, and no power will make them rise again to the light. These few points subsist alone, like the tops of the highest rocks of a submerged continent. With what ardour, what deep feeling for the destroyed worlds, of which these rocks are the remains, does the historian lay upon them his eager hands, to discover from their nature and structure some revelation of the great drowned regions, which no eye shall ever see again! A number, a trifling detail about expense, a petty phrase of barbarous Latin, is priceless in the sight of Carlyle. I should like you to read the commentary with which he surrounds the chronicle of the monk Jocelin of Brakelond,[1] to show you the impression which a proved fact produces on such a soul; all the attention and emotion that an old barbarous word, a kitchen list, summons up:

'Behold therefore, this England of the Year 1200 was no chimerical vacuity or dreamland, peopled with mere vaporous Fantasms, Rymer's Fœdera, and Doctrines of the Constitution; but a green solid place, that grew corn and several other things. The sun shone on it; the vicissitude of seasons and human fortunes. Cloth was woven and worn; ditches were dug, furrow-fields ploughed, and houses built. Day by day all men and cattle rose to labour, and night by night returned home weary to their several lairs. . . . The *Dominus Rex*, at departing, gave us "thirteen *sterlingii*," one shilling and one penny, to say a mass for him. . . . For king Lackland *was* there, verily he. . . . There, we say, is the grand peculiarity; the immeasurable one; distinguishing, to a really infinite degree, the poorest historical Fact from all Fiction whatsoever. "Fiction," "Imagination," "Imaginative poetry," &c. &c., except as the vehicle for truth, or is fact of some sort . . . what is it?[2] . . . And yet these grim old walls are not a dilettantism and dubiety; they are an earnest fact. It was a most real and serious purpose they were built for! Yes, another world it was, when these black ruins, white in their new mortar and fresh chiselling, first saw the sun as walls, long ago. . . . Their architecture, belfries, land-carucates? Yes,—and that is but a small item of the matter. Does it never give thee pause, this other strange item of it, that men then had a *soul*,—not by hearsay alone, and as a figure of speech; but as a truth that they *knew*, and practically went upon!'[3]

And then he tries to resuscitate this soul before our eyes; for this is his special feature, the special feature of every historian who has the sentiment of actuality, to understand that parchments, walls, dress, bodies themselves, are only cloaks and documents; that the true fact is the inner feeling of men who have lived, that the only important

[1] In *Past and Present*, bk. ii. [2] *Ibid.* bk. ii. ch. i.; *Jocelin of Brakelond*
[3] *Ibid.* ch. ii.; *St. Edmondsburg.*

fact is the state and structure of their soul, that the first and unique business is to reach that inner feeling, that all diverges from it. We must tell ourselves this fact over and over again: history is but the history of the heart; we have to search out the feelings of past generations, and nothing else. This is what Carlyle perceives; man is before him, risen from the dead; he penetrates within him, sees that he feels, suffers, and wills, in that special and individual manner, now absolutely lost and extinguished, in which he did feel, suffer, and will. And he looks upon this sight, not coldly, like a man who only half sees things in a gray mist, indistinctly and uncertain, but with all the force of his heart and sympathy, like a convinced spectator, for whom past things, once proved, are as present and visible as the corporeal objects which his hand handles and touches, at the very moment. He feels this fact so clearly, that he bases upon it all his philosophy and history. In his opinion, great men, kings, writers, prophets, and poets are only great in this sense:

'It is the property of the hero, in every time, in every place, in every situation, that he comes back to reality; that he stands upon things, and not shows of things.'[1]

The great man discovers some unknown or neglected fact, proclaims it; men hear him, follow him; and this is the whole of history. And not only does he discover and proclaim it, but he believes and sees it. He believes it, not as hearsay or conjecture, like a truth simply probable and handed down; he sees it personally, face to face, with absolute and indomitable faith; he deserts opinion for conviction, tradition for intuition. Carlyle is so steeped in his process, that he applies it to all great men. And he is not wrong, for there is none more potent. Wherever he penetrates with this lamp, he carries a light not known before. He pierces mountains of paper erudition, and enters into the hearts of men. Everywhere he goes beyond political and conventional history. He divines characters, comprehends the spirit of extinguished ages, feels better than an Englishman, better than Macaulay himself, the great revolutions of the soul. He is almost German in his force of imagination, his antiquarian perspicacity, his broad general views, and yet he is no dealer in guesses. The national common sense and the energetic craving for profound belief retain him on the limits of supposition; when he does guess, he gives it for what it is worth. He has no taste for hazardous history. He rejects hearsay and legends; he accepts only partially, and under reserve, the Germanic etymologies and hypotheses. He wishes to draw from history a positive and active law for himself and us. He expels and tears away from it, all the doubtful and agreeable additions which scientific curiosity and romantic imagination accumulate. He puts aside this parasitic growth to seize the useful and solid wood. And when he has seized it, he drags it so energetically before us, in order

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, 1868.

to make us touch it, he handles it in so violent a manner, he places it under such a glaring light, he illuminates it by such coarse contrasts of extraordinary images, that we are infected, and in spite of ourselves reach the intensity of his belief and vision.

He goes beyond, or rather is carried beyond this. The facts seized upon by this vehement imagination, are melted in it as in a fire. Beneath this fury of conception, all vacillates. Ideas, changed into hallucinations, lose their solidity, beings are like dreams; the world, appearing in a nightmare, seems no more than a nightmare; the attestation of the bodily senses loses its weight before inner visions as lucid as itself. Man finds no more difference between his dreams and his perceptions. Mysticism enters like a smoke within the overheated walls of a collapsing imagination. It was thus that it once penetrated into the ecstasies of ascetic Hindoos, and into the philosophy of our first two centuries. Throughout, the same state of the imagination has produced the same doctrine. The Puritans, Carlyle's true ancestors, were all inclined to it. Shakspeare reached it by the prodigious tension of his poetic dreams, and Carlyle ceaselessly repeats after him that 'we are such stuff as dreams are made of.' This real world, these events so harshly followed up, circumscribed, and handled, are to him only apparitions; the universe is divine. 'Thy daily life is girt with wonder, and based on wonder; thy very blankets and breeches are miracles. . . . The unspeakable divine significance, full of splendour, and wonder, and terror, lies in the being of every man and of every thing; the presence of God who made every man and thing.'

'Atheistic science babbles poorly of it, with scientific nomenclatures, experiments, and what-not, as if it were a poor dead thing, to be bottled up in Leyden jars, and sold over counters: but the natural sense of man, in all times, if he will honestly apply his sense, proclaims it to be a living thing,—ah, an unspeakable, godlike thing; towards which the best attitude for us, after never so much science, is awe, devout prostration and humility of soul; worship if not in words, then in silence.'[1]

In fact, this is the ordinary position of Carlyle. It ends in wonder. Beyond and beneath objects, he perceives as it were an abyss, and is interrupted by shudderings. A score of times, a hundred times in the *History of the French Revolution*, we have him suspending his account, and dreaming. The immensity of the black night in which the human apparitions rise for an instant, the fatality of the crime which, once committed, remains attached to the chain of events as by a link of iron, the mysterious conduct which impels these floating masses to an unknown but inevitable end, are the great and sinister images which haunt him. He dreams anxiously of this focus of existence, of which we are only the reflection. He walks fearfully amongst this people of shadows, and tells himself, that he too is a shadow. He is troubled by the thought

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity*.

that these human phantoms have their substance elsewhere, and will answer to eternity for their short passage. He cries and trembles at the idea of this motionless world, of which ours is but the mutable figure. He divines in it something august and terrible. For he shapes it, and he shapes our world according to his own mind; he defines it by the emotions which he draws from it, and figures it by the impressions which he receives from it. A moving chaos of splendid visions, of infinite perspectives, stirs and boils within him at the least event which he touches; ideas abound, violent, mutually jostling, driven from all sides of the horizon amidst darkness and the flashes of lightning: his thought is a tempest, and he attributes to the universe the magnificence, the obscurities, and the terrors of a tempest. Such a conception is the true source of religious and moral sentiment. The man who is penetrated by them passes his life, like a Puritan, in veneration and fear. Carlyle passes his in expressing and impressing veneration and fear, and all his books are preachings.

V.

Here truly is a strange mind, and one which makes us reflect. Nothing is more calculated to manifest truths than these eccentric beings. It will not be time misspent to discover the true position of this mind, and to explain for what reasons, and in what measure, he must fail to possess, or must attain to, beauty and truth.

As soon as we wish to begin to think, we have before us a whole and distinct object—that is, an assemblage of details connected amongst themselves, and separated from their surroundings. Whatever the object, tree, animal, sentiment, event, it is always the same; it always has parts, and these parts always form a whole: this group, more or less vast, comprises others, and is comprised in others, so that the smallest portion of the universe is, like the entire universe, a group. Thus the whole employment of human thought is to reproduce groups. According as a mind is fit for this or not, it is capable or incapable. According as it can reproduce great or small groups, it is great or small. According as it can produce complete groups, or only certain of their parts, it is complete or partial.

What is it, then, to reproduce a group? It is first to separate therefrom all the parts, then to arrange them in ranks according to their resemblances, then to form these ranks into families, lastly to combine the whole under some general and dominant mark; in short, to imitate the hierarchical classifications of science. But the task is not ended there: this hierarchy is not an artificial and external arrangement, but a natural and internal necessity. Things are not dead, but living; there is in them a force which produces and organises this group, which binds together the details and the whole, which repeats the type in all its parts. It is this force which the mind must reproduce in itself, with all its effects; it must perceive it by rebound and sympathy: this force

must engender in the mind the entire group, and must be developed within it as without it: the series of internal ideas must imitate the series of external; the emotion must follow the conception, vision must complete analysis; the mind must become, like nature, creative. Then only can we say, We know.

All minds take one or other of these routes, and are divided by them into two great classes, corresponding to opposite temperaments. In the first are the plain men of science, the popularisers, orators, writers—in general, the classical ages and the Latin races; in the second are the poets, prophets, commonly the inventors—in general, the romantic ages and the Germanic races. The first proceed gradually from one idea to the next: they are methodical and cautious; they speak for the world at large, and prove what they say; they divide the field which they would traverse into sections to begin with, in order to exhaust their subject; they march by straight and level roads, so as to be sure against a fall; they proceed by transitions, enumerations, summaries; they advance from general to still more general conclusions; they form the exact and complete classification of a group. When they go beyond simple analysis, their whole talent consists in eloquently pleading a thesis. Amongst the contemporaries of Carlyle, Macaulay is the most complete model of this species of mind. The others, after having violently and confusedly rummaged amongst the details of a group, plunge with a sudden spring into the mother-notion. They see it then in its entirety; they perceive the powers which organise it; they reproduce it by divination; they depict it in miniature by the most expressive words, the strangest ideas; they are not capable of decomposing it into regular series, they always perceive in a lump. They think only by sudden concentrations of vehement ideas. They have a vision of distant effects or living actions; they are revealers or poets. Michelet, amongst the French, is the best example of this form of intellect, and Carlyle is an English Michelet.

He knows it, and argues plausibly that genius is an intuition, an insight:

'Our Professor's method is not, in any case, that of common school Logic, where the truths all stand in a row, each holding by the skirts of the other; but at best that of practical Reason, proceeding by large Intuition over whole systematic groups and kingdoms; whereby, we might say, a noble complexity, almost like that of Nature, reigns in his Philosophy, or spiritual Picture of Nature: a mighty maze, yet, as faith whispers, not without a plan.'[1]

Doubtless, but disadvantages nevertheless are not wanting; and, in the first place, obscurity and barbarism. In order to understand him, we must study laboriously, or else have precisely the same kind of mind as he. But few men are critics by profession, or natural seers; in general, an author writes to be understood, and it is annoying to end in enigmas

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. viii.; *The World out of Clothes*.

On the other hand, this visionary process is hazardous: when we wish to leap immediately into the familiar and generative idea, we run the risk of falling short; the gradual progress is slower, but more sure. The methodical people, so much ridiculed by Carlyle, have at least the advantage over him in being able to verify all their steps. Moreover, these vehement divinations and assertions are very often void of proof. Carlyle leaves the reader to search for them: the reader at times does not search for them, and refuses to believe the soothsayer on his word. Consider, again, that affectation infallibly enters into this style. It must assuredly be inevitable, since Shakspeare is full of it. The simple writer, prosaic and rational, can always reason and stick to his prose; his inspiration has no gaps, and demands no efforts. On the contrary, prophecy is a violent condition which does not sustain itself. When it fails, it is replaced by grand gesticulation. Carlyle warms himself up in order to continue glowing. He struggles hard; and this forced perpetual epilepsy is a most shocking spectacle. We cannot endure a man who wanders, repeats himself, returns to oddities and exaggerations already worn bare, makes a jargon of them, declaims, exclaims, and makes it a point, like a wretched bombastic comedian, to upset our nerves. Finally, when this species of mind coincides in a lofty mind with the habits of a gloomy preacher, it results in objectionable manners. Many will find Carlyle presumptuous, coarse; they will suspect from his theories, and also from his way of speaking, that he looks upon himself as a great man, neglected, of the race of heroes; that, in his opinion, the human race ought to put themselves in his hands, and trust him with their business. Certainly he lectures us, and with contempt. He despises his epoch; he has a sulky, sour tone; he keeps purposely on stilts. He disdains objections. In his eyes, opponents are not up to his form. He bullies his predecessors: when he speaks of Cromwell's biographers, he takes the tone of a man of genius astray amongst pedants. He has the superior smile, the resigned condescension of a hero who feels himself a martyr, and he only quits it, to shout at the top of his voice, like an ill-taught plebeian.

All this is redeemed, and more, by rare advantages. He speaks truly: minds like his are the most fertile. They are almost the only ones which make discoveries. Pure classifiers do not invent; they are too dry. 'To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first *love* the thing, sympathise with it.' 'Fantasy is the organ of the Godlike, the understanding is indeed thy window; too clear thou canst not make it; but fantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased.' In more simple language, this means that every object, animate or inanimate, is gifted with powers which constitute its nature and produce its development; that, in order to know it, we must recreate it in ourselves, with the train of its potentialities, and that we only know it entirely by inwardly perceiving all its tendencies, and inwardly *seeing* all its effects. And verily this process,

which is the imitation of nature, is the only one by which we can penetrate nature; Shakspeare had it as an instinct, and Goethe as a method. There is none so powerful or delicate, so fitted to the complexity of things and to the structure of our mind. There is none more proper to renew our ideas, to withdraw us from formulas, to deliver us from the prejudices with which education involves us, to overthrow the barriers in which our surroundings enclose us. It is by this that Carlyle escaped from conventional English ideas, penetrated into the philosophy and science of Germany, to think out again in his own manner the Germanic discoveries, and to give an original theory of man and of the universe.

§ 2.—Vocation.

It is from Germany that Carlyle has drawn his greateat ideas. He studied there, he knows perfectly its literature and language, he sets this literature in the highest rank, he translated *Wilhelm Meister*, he wrote upon the German writers a long series of critical articles, he has just written a life of Frederick the Great. He has been the most recognised and most original of the interpreters who have introduced the German mind into England. This is no mean work, for it is in a like work that every thinking person is now labouring.

I.

From 1780 to 1830 Germany has produced all the ideas of our historic age; and for half a century still, perhaps for a whole century, our great work will be to think them out again. The thoughts which have been born and have blossomed in a country, never fail to propagate themselves in the neighbouring countries, and to be engrafted there for a season. That which is happening to us has happened twenty times already in the world; the growth of the mind has always been the same, and we may, with some assurance, foresee for the future what we observe in the past. At certain times appears an original form of mind, which produces a philosophy, a literature, an art, a science, and which, having renewed human thought, slowly and infallibly renews all human thoughts. All minds which seek and find are in the current; they only progress through it: if they oppose it, they are checked; if they deviate, they are slackened; if they assist it, they are carried beyond the rest. And the movement goes on so long as there remains anything to be discovered. When art has given all its works, philosophy all its theories, science all its discoveries, it stops; another form of mind takes the sway, or man ceases to think. Thus at the Renaissance appeared the artistic and poetic genius, which, born in Italy and carried into Spain, was there extinguished after a century and a half, in universal extinction, and which, with other characteristics, transplanted into France and England, ended after a hundred

years in the refinements of mannerists and the follies of sectarians, having produced the Reformation, confirmed free thought, and founded science. Thus with Dryden and Malherbe was born the oratorical and classical spirit, which, having produced the literature of the seventeenth century and the philosophy of the eighteenth, dried up under the successors of Voltaire and Pope, and died after two hundred years, having polished Europe and raised the French Revolution. Thus at the end of the last century arose the philosophic German genius, which, having engendered a new metaphysics, theology, poetry, literature, linguistic science, an exegesis, erudition, descends now into the sciences, and continues its evolution. No more original spirit, more universal, more fertile in consequences of every scope and species, more capable of transforming and reforming everything, has appeared for three hundred years. It is of the same order as that of the Renaissance and of the Classical Age. It, like them, connects itself with the great works of contemporary intelligence, appears in all civilised lands, is propagated with the same inward qualities, but under different forms. It, like them, is one of the epochs of the world's history. It is encountered in the same civilisation and in the same races. We may then conjecture without too much rashness, that it will have a like duration and destiny. We thus succeed in fixing with some precision our place in the endless stream of events and things. We know that we are almost in the midst of one of the partial currents which compose it. We can detach the form of mind which directs it, and seek beforehand the ideas to which it conducts us.

II.

Wherein consists this form? In the power of discovering general ideas. No nation and no age has possessed it in so high a degree as the Germans. This is their governing faculty; it is by this power that they have produced all they have done. This gift is properly that of comprehension (*begreifen*). By it we find the aggregate conceptions (*Begriffe*); we reduce under one ruling idea all the scattered parts of a subject; we perceive under the divisions of a group the common bond which unites them; we conciliate objections; we bring down apparent contrasts to a profound unity. It is the pre-eminent philosophical faculty; and, in fact, it is the philosophical faculty which has impressed its seal on all their works. By it, they have vivified dry studies, which seemed only fit to occupy pedants of the academy or seminary. By it, they have divined the involuntary and primitive logic which has created and organised languages, the great ideas which are hidden at the bottom of every work of art, the dull poetic emotions and vague metaphysical intuitions which have engendered religions and myths. By it, they have perceived the spirit of ages, civilisations, and races, and transformed into a system of laws the history which was but a heap of facts. By it, they have rediscovered or renewed the

sense of dogmas, connected God with the world, man with nature, spirit with matter, perceived the successive chain and the original necessity of the forms, whereof the aggregate is the universe. By it, they have created a science of linguistics, a mythology, a criticism, an æsthetics, an exegesis, a history, a theology and metaphysics, so new that they continued long incomprehensible, and could only be expressed by a separate language. And this bent was so dominant, that it subjected to its empire arts and poetry themselves. The poets by it have become erudite, philosophical; they have constructed their dramas, epics, and odes after prearranged theories, and in order to manifest general ideas. They have rendered moral theses, historical periods, sensible; they have created and applied æsthetics; they had no artlessness, or made their artlessness an instrument of reflection; they have not loved their characters for themselves; they have ended by transforming them into symbols; their philosophical ideas have broken every instant out of the poetic shape, in which they tried to enclose them; they have been all critics,[1] bent on constructing or reconstructing, possessing erudition and method, attracted to imagination by art and study, incapable of producing living beings unless by science and artifice, really systematical, who, to express their abstract conceptions, have employed, in place of formulas, the actions of personages and the music of verse.

III.

From this aptitude to conceive the aggregate, one sole idea could be produced—the idea of aggregates. In fact, all the ideas worked out for fifty years in Germany are reduced to one only, that of development (*Entwickelung*), which consists in representing all the parts of a group as jointly responsible and complemental, so that each necessitates the rest, and that, all combined, they manifest, by their succession and their contrasts, the inner quality which assembles and produces them. A score of systems, a hundred dreams, a hundred thousand metaphors, have variously figured or disfigured this fundamental idea. Despoiled of its trappings, it merely affirms the mutual dependence which unites the terms of a series, and attaches them all to some abstract property within them. If we apply it to Nature, we come to consider the world as a scale of forms, and, as it were, a succession of conditions, having in themselves the reason for their succession and for their existence, containing in their nature the necessity for their decay and their limitation, composing by their union an indivisible whole, which, sufficing for itself, exhausting all possibilities, and connecting all things, from time and space to existence and thought, resemble by its harmony and its magnificence some omnipotent and immortal god. If we apply it to man, we come to consider sentiments and thoughts as natural and

[1] Goethe, the greatest of them all.

necessary products, linked amongst themselves like the transformations of an animal or plant; which leads us to conceive religions, philosophies, literatures, all human conceptions and emotions, as necessary series of a state of mind which carries them away on its passage, which, if it returns, brings them back, and which, if we can reproduce it, gives us indirectly the means of reproducing them at will. These are the two doctrines which run through the writings of the two chief thinkers of the century, Hegel and Goethe. They have used them throughout as a method, Hegel to grasp the formula of everything, Goethe to obtain the vision of everything; they have steeped themselves therein so thoroughly, that they have drawn thence their inner and habitual sentiments, their morality and their conduct. We may consider them to be the two philosophical legacies which modern Germany has left to the human race.

IV.

But these legacies have not been unmixed, and this passion for aggregate views has marred its proper work by its excess. It is rarely that our mind can grasp aggregates: we are imprisoned in too narrow a corner of time and space; our senses perceive only the surface of things; our instruments have but a small scope; we have only been experimentalising for three centuries; our memory is short, and the documents by which we dive into the past are only doubtful lights, scattered over an immense region, which they show by glimpses without illuminating them. To bind together the small fragments which we are able to attain, we have generally to guess the causes, or to employ general ideas so vast, that they might suit all facts; we must have recourse either to hypothesis or abstraction, invent arbitrary explanations, or be lost in vague ones. These, in fact, are the two vices which have corrupted German thought. Conjecture and formula have abounded. Systems have multiplied, some above the others, and broken out into an inextricable growth, into which no stranger dare enter, having found that every morning brought a new budding, and that the definitive discovery proclaimed over-night was about to be choked by another infallible discovery, capable at most of lasting till the morning after. The public of Europe was astonished to see so much imagination and so little common sense, pretensions so ambitious and theories so hollow, such an invasion of chimerical existences and such an overflow of useless abstractions, so strange a lack of discernment and so great a luxuriance of irrationality. The fact was, that folly and genius flowed from the same source; a like faculty, excessive and all-powerful, produced discoveries and errors. If to-day we behold the workshop of human ideas, overcharged as it is and encumbered by its works, we may compare it to some blast-furnace, a monstrous machine which day and night has flamed unwearingly, half darkened by choking vapours, and in which the raw ore, piled heaps on heaps, has descended bubbling in

glowing streams into the channels in which it has become hard. No other furnace could have melted the shapeless mass, crusted over with the primitive scoriæ; this obstinate elaboration and this intense heat were necessary to overcome it. Now the sluggish tappings burden the earth; their weight discourages the hands which touch them; if we would turn them to some use, they defy us or break: as they are, they are of no use; and yet as they are, they are the material for every tool, and the instrument of every work; it is our business to cast them over again. Every mind must carry them back to the forge, purify them, temper them, recast them, and extract the pure metal from the rough mass.

V.

But every mind will re-forge them according to its own inner warmth; for every nation has its original genius, in which it moulds the ideas elsewhere derived. Thus Spain, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, renewed in a different spirit the Italian painting and poetry. Thus the Puritans and Jansenists thought out in new times the primitive Protestantism; thus the French of the eighteenth century widened and put forth the liberal ideas, which the English had applied or proposed in religion and politics. It is so in the present day. The French cannot at once reach, like the Germans, lofty aggregate conceptions. They can only march step by step, starting from concrete ideas, rising gradually to abstract ideas, after the progressive methods and gradual analysis of Condillac and Descartes. But this slower route leads almost as far as the other; and in addition, it avoids many wrong steps. It is by this route that we succeed in correcting and comprehending the views of Hegel and Goethe; and if we look around us, at the ideas which are gaining ground, we find that we are already arriving thither. Positivism, based on all modern experience, and freed since the death of its founder from his social and religious fancies, has assumed a new life, by reducing itself to noting the connection of natural groups and the chain of established sciences. On the other hand, history, romance, and criticism, sharpened by the refinements of Parisian culture, have clearly brought forward the laws of human events; nature has been shown to be an order of facts, man a continuation of nature; and we have seen a superior mind, the most delicate, the most lofty of our own time, resuming and modifying the German divinations, expounding in the French manner everything which the science of myths, religions, and languages had stored up, beyond the Rhine, during the last sixty years.[1]

VI.

The growth in England is more difficult; for the aptitude for general ideas is less, and the mistrust of general ideas is greater: they

[1] M. Renan.

reject at once all that remotely or nearly seems capable of injuring practical morality or established dogma. The positive spirit seems as if it must exclude all German ideas; and yet it is the positive spirit which introduces them. Thus theologians,[1] having desired to represent to themselves with entire clearness and certitude the characters of the New Testament, have suppressed the halo and mist in which distance enveloped them; they have figured them with their garments, gestures, accent, all the shades of emotion which their style has marked, with the species of imagination which their age has imposed, amidst the scenery which they have looked upon, amongst the relics before which they have spoken, with all the circumstances, physical or moral, which learning and travel can render sensible, with all the comparisons which modern physiology and psychology could suggest; they have given us their precise and demonstrated, coloured and graphic idea; they have seen these personages, not through ideas and as myths, but face to face and as men. They have applied Macaulay's art to exegesis; and if German erudition could pass unmutilated through this crucible, its solidity, as well as its value, would be doubled.

But there is another wholly Germanic route by which German ideas may become English. This is the road which Carlyle has taken; by this, religion and poetry in the two countries are correspondent; by it the two nations are sisters. The sentiment of internal things (insight) is in the race, and this sentiment is a sort of philosophical divination. At need, the heart takes the place of the brain. The inspired, impassioned man penetrates into things; perceives the cause by the shock which he feels from it; he embraces aggregates by the lucidity and velocity of his creative imagination; he discovers the unity of a group by the unity of the emotion which he receives from it. For, as soon as you create, you feel within yourself the force which acts in the objects of your thought; your sympathy reveals to you their sense and connection; intuition is a finished and living analysis; poets and prophets, Shakspeare and Dante, St. Paul and Luther, have been systematic theorists, without wishing it, and their visions comprise general conceptions of man and the universe. Carlyle's mysticism is a power of the same kind. He translates into a poetic and religious style German philosophy. He speaks, like Fichte, of the divine idea of the world, the reality which lies at the bottom of every apparition. He speaks, like Goethe, of the spirit which eternally weaves the living robe of Divinity. He borrows their metaphors, only he takes them literally. He considers the god, which they consider as a form or a law, as a mysterious and sublime being. He conceives by exaltation, by painful reverie, by a confused sentiment of the interweaving of existences, that unity of nature which they arrive at by dint of reasonings and abstractions. Here is a last route, steep doubtless, and little frequented, for reaching the summits

[1] In particular, Stanley and Jowett.

from which German thought at first issued forth. Methodical analysis added to the co-ordination of the positive sciences; French criticism refined by literary taste and worldly observation; English criticism supported by practical common sense and positive intuition; lastly, in a niche apart, sympathetic and poetic imagination: these are the four routes by which the human mind is now proceeding to reconquer the sublime heights to which it believed itself carried, and which it has lost. These routes all conduct to the same summit, but by four different distances. That by which Carlyle has advanced, being the lengthiest, has led him to the strangest perspective. I will let him speak for himself; he will tell the reader what he has seen.

§ 3.—Philosophy, Morality, and Criticism.

'However it may be with Metaphysics, and other abstract Science originating in the Head (*Verstand*) alone, no Life-Philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), such as this of Clothes pretends to be, which originates equally in the Character (*Gemüth*), and equally speaks thereto, can attain its significance till the Character itself is known and seen.'[1]

Carlyle has related, under the name of Teufelsdroeckh, all the succession of emotions which lead to this Life-Philosophy. They are those of a modern Puritan; the same doubts, despairs, internal conflicts, exaltations, and lacerations, by which the old Puritans arrived at faith: it is their faith under other forms. With him, as with them, the spiritual and inner man is distinguished from the exterior and carnal; extricates duty from the solicitations of pleasure; discovers God through the appearances of nature; and, beyond the world and the instincts of sense, perceives a supernatural world and instinct.

I.

The specialty of Carlyle, as of every mystic, is to see a double meaning in everything. For him texts and objects are capable of two interpretations: the one gross, open to all, serviceable for ordinary life; the other sublime, open to a few, serviceable to a higher life. Carlyle says:

'To the eye of vulgar Logic, what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches. To the eye of Pure Reason what is he? A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious Me, there lies, under all those wool-rags, a Garment of Flesh (or of Senses), contextured in the Loom of Heaven. . . . Deep-hidden is he under that strange Garment; amid Sounds and Colours and Forms, as it were, swathed-in, and inextricably over-shrouded: yet it is skywoven, and worthy of a God.'[2]

'For Matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit, the manifestation of Spirit: were it never so honourable, can it be more? The thing Visible, nay, the thing Imagined, the thing in any way conceived as Visible, what is it but a Garment, a Clothing of the higher, celestial, Invisible, "unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright?"'[3]

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. xi.; *Prospective*.

[2] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. x. *Pure Reason*.

[3] *Ibid.*

'All visible things are emblems; what thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken, is not there at all: Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea, and *body* it forth.'[1]

Language, poetry, arts, church, state, are only symbols:

'In the Symbol proper, what we can call a Symbol, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. By Symbols, accordingly, is man guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched. He everywhere finds himself encompassed with Symbols, recognised as such or not recognised: the Universe is but one vast Symbol of God; nay, if thou will have it, what is man himself but a Symbol of God; is not all that he does symbolical; a revelation to Sense of the mystic god-given force that is in him?'[2]

Let us rise higher still, and regard Time and Space, those two abysses which it seems nothing could fill up or destroy, and over which hover our life and our universe. 'They are but forms of our thought. . . . There is neither Time nor Space; they are but two grand fundamental, world-enveloping appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial ME for dwelling here, and yet to blind it,—lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor illusions, in this Phantasm Existence, weave and paint themselves.'[3] Our root is in eternity; we seem to be born and to die, but actually, *we are.*

'Know of a truth that only the Time-shadows have perished, or are perishable; that the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and for ever. . . . Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility?'[4] 'O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh.

'And again, do we not squeak and gibber (in our discordant, screech-owlish debatings and recriminatings); and glide bodeful, and feeble, and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day?'[5]

What is there, then, beneath all these vain appearances? What is this motionless existence, whereof nature is but the 'changing and living robe?' None knows; if the heart divines it, the mind perceives it not. 'Creation,' says one, 'lies before us like a glorious rainbow; but the sun that made it lies behind us, hidden from us.' We have

[1] *Sartor Resartus,* bk. i. ch. xi.; *Prospective.*

[2] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. iii.; *Symbols.*

[3] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii., *Natural Supernaturalism.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

only the sentiment thereof, not the idea. We feel that this universe is beautiful and terrible, but its essence will remain ever unnamed. We have only to fall on our knees before this veiled face; wonder and adoration are our true attitude:

'The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mécanique Céleste* and *Hegel's Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories, with their results, in his single head,—is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye. Let those who have Eyes look through him, then he may be useful.

'Thou wilt have no Mystery and Mysticism; wilt walk through thy world by the sunshine of what thou callest Truth, or even by the hand-lamp of what I call Attorney-Logic: and "explain" all, "account" for all, or believe nothing of it. Nay, thou wilt attempt laughter; whoso recognises the unfathomable, all-pervading domain of Mystery, which is everywhere under our feet and among our hands; to whom the Universe is an Oracle and Temple, as well as a Kitchen and Cattle-stall, —he shall be a delirious Mystic; to him thou, with sniffing charity, wilt protrusively proffer thy Hand-lamp, and shriek, as one injured, when he kicks his foot through it.'[1]

'We speak of the Volume of Nature; and truly a Volume it is,—whose Author and Writer is God. To read it! Dost thou, does man, so much as well know the Alphabet thereof? With its Words, Sentences, and grand descriptive Pages, poetical and philosophical, spread out through Solar Systems, and Thousands of Years, we shall not try thee. It is a Volume written in celestial hieroglyphs, in the true Sacred-writing; of which even Prophets are happy that they can read here a line and there a line. As for your Institutes, and Academies of Science, they strive bravely; and from amid the thick-crowded, inextricably intertwisted hieroglyphic writing, pick out, by dextrous combination, some Letters in the vulgar Character, and therefrom put together this and the other economic Recipe, of high avail in Practice.'[2]

Do you believe, perhaps,

'That Nature is more than some boundless Volume of such Recipes, or huge, well-nigh inexhaustible Domestic-Cookery Book, of which the whole secret will in this manner one day evolve itself?'[3] . . .

'And what is that Science, which the scientific head alone, were it screwed off, and (like the Doctor's in the Arabian tale) set in a basin, to keep it alive, could prosecute without shadow of a heart, but one other of the mechanical and menial handicrafts, for which the Scientific Head (having a Soul in it) is too noble an organ? I mean that Thought without Reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous.'[4]

Let the scales drop from your eyes, and look:

'Then sawest thou that this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams.'[5]

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[2] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism.*
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. x.: *Pure Reason*
[5] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism.*

'Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry; one, hunter-like, climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to Sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth, then plunge again into the Inane. . . . But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.'[1]

II.

This vehement religious poetry, charged as it is with memories of Milton and Shakspeare, is but an English transcription of German ideas. There is a fixed rule for transposing,—that is, for converting into one another the ideas of a positivist, a pantheist, a spiritualist, a mystic, a poet, a head given to images, and a head given to formulas. We may mark all the steps which lead simple philosophical conception to its extreme and violent state. Take the world as science shows it; it is a regular group, or, if you will, a series which has a law; according to science, it is nothing more. As from the law we deduce the series, you may say that the law engenders it, and consider this law as a force. If you are an artist, you will seize in the aggregate the force, the series of effects, and the fine regular manner in which the force produces the series. To my mind, this sympathetic representation is of all the most exact and complete: knowledge is limited, as long as it does not arrive at this, and it is complete when it has arrived there. But beyond, there commence the phantoms which the mind creates, and by which it dupes itself. If you have a little imagination, you will make of this force a distinct existence, situated beyond the reach of experience, spiritual, the principle and the substance of concrete things. That is a metaphysical existence. Add one degree to your imagination and enthusiasm, and you will say that this spirit, situated beyond time and space, is manifested through these, that it subsists and animates everything, that we have in it motion, existence, and life. Push to the limits of vision and ecstasy, and you will declare that this principle is the only reality, that the rest is but appearance: thenceforth you are deprived of all the means of defining it; you can affirm nothing of it, but that it is the source of things, and that nothing can be affirmed of it; you will consider it as a grand unfathomable abyss; you seek, in order to come at it, a path other than that of clear ideas; you recognise sentiment, exaltation. If you have a gloomy

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism*.

temperament, you seek it, like the sectarians, gloomily, amongst prostrations and agonies. By this scale of transformations, the general idea becomes a poetic, then a philosophical, then a mystical existence; and German metaphysics, concentrated and heated, is changed into English Puritanism.

III.

What distinguishes this mysticism from others is its practicability The Puritan is troubled not only about what he ought to believe, but about what he ought to do; he craves an answer to his doubts, but especially a rule for his conduct; he is tormented by the notion of his ignorance, but also by the horror of his vices; he seeks God, but duty also. In his eyes the two are but one; moral sense is the promoter and guide of philosophy:

'Is there no God, then; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of his Universe, and *seeing* it go? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Fantasm, made-up of Desire and Fear, of emanations from the gallows and from Dr. Graham's Celestial-Bed? Happiness of an approving Conscience! Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was the "chief of sinners;" and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling? Foolish Word-monger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of pleasure,—I tell thee, Nay!'[1]

There is an instinct within us which says Nay. We discover within us something higher than love of happiness,—the love of sacrifice. That is the divine part of our soul. We perceive in it and by it the God, who otherwise would continue ever unknown. By it we penetrate an unknown and sublime world. There is an extraordinary state of the soul, by which it leaves selfishness, renounces pleasure, cares no more for itself, adores pain, comprehends holiness:

'Only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull, unimaginative days, are the terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect!'[2]

This obscure beyond, which the senses cannot reach, the reason cannot define, which the imagination figures as a king and a person; this is holiness, this is the sublime. 'The hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial; his being is in that. . . . His life is a piece of the everlasting heart of nature itself.'[3] Virtue is a revelation, heroism is a light, conscience a philosophy; and we shall

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch. vii.; *The Everlasting No.*
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Lectures on Heroes.*

express in the abstract this moral mysticism, by saying that God, for Carlyle, is a mystery, whose only name is The Ideal.

IV.

This faculty for perceiving the inner sense of things, and this disposition to search out the moral sense of things, have produced in him all his doctrines, and first his Christianity. This Christianity is very free: Carlyle takes religion in the German manner, after a symbolical fashion. This is why he is called a Pantheist, which in plain language means a madman or a rogue. In England, too, he is exorcised. His friend Sterling sent him long dissertations to bring him back to a personal God. Every moment he wounds to the quick the theologians, who make the prime cause into an architect or an administrator. He shocks them still more when he touches upon dogma; he considers Christianity as a myth, of which the essence is the Worship of Sorrow:

'Knowest thou that "*Worship of sorrow?*" The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning.'[1]

But its guardians know it no more. A frippery of conventional adornments hides it from the eyes of men. The Protestant Church in the nineteenth century, like the Catholic Church in the sixteenth, needs a reformation. We want a new Luther:

'For if Government is, so to speak, the outward SKIN of the Body Politic, holding the whole together and protecting it; and if all your Craft-Guilds and Associations for Industry, of hand or of head, are the Fleshly Clothes, the muscular and osseous Tissues (lying *under* such SKIN), whereby Society stands and works; —then is Religion the inmost Pericardial and Nervous Tissue which ministers Life and warm Circulation to the whole . . .

'Meanwhile, in our era of the World, those same Church Clothes have gone sorrowfully out-at-elbows: nay, far worse, many of them have become mere hollow Shapes, or Masks, under which no living Figure or Spirit any longer dwells; but only spiders and unclean beetles, in horrid accumulation, drive their trade; and the mask still glares on you with its glass-eyes, in ghastly affectation of Life, —some generation and half after Religion has quite withdrawn from it, and in unnoticed nooks is weaving for herself new Vestures, wherewith to reappear and bless us, or our sons or grandsons.'[2]

Christianity once reduced to the sentiment of abnegation, other religions resume, in consequence, dignity and importance. They are, like Christianity, forms of universal religion. 'They have all had a truth in them, or men would not have taken them up.'[3] They are no quack's

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch ix.; *The Everlasting Yea.*
Ibid. bk. iii. ch. ii.; *Church Clothes.*
[2] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*

imposture or poet's dream. They are an existence more or less troubled by the mystery, august and infinite, which is at the bottom of the universe:

'Canopus shining down over the desert, with its blue diamond brightness (that wild blue spirit-like brightness, far brighter than we ever witness here), would pierce into the heart of the wild Ishmaelitish man, whom it was guiding through the solitary waste there. To his wild heart, with all feelings in it, with no *speech* for any feeling, it might seem a little eye, that Canopus, glancing-out on him from the great deep Eternity; revealing the inner Splendour to him.'[1]

'Grand Lamaism,' Popery itself, interpret after their fashion the sentiment of the divine; therefore Popery itself is to be respected. 'While a *pious* life remains capable of being led by it, . . . let it last as long as it can.'[2] What matters if they call it idolatry?

'Idol is *Eidolon*, a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a symbol of God. . . . Is not all worship whatsoever a worship by Symbols, by *eidola*, or things seen? . . . The most rigorous Puritan has his Confession of Faith, and intellectual Representation of Divine things, and worships thereby. . . . All creeds, liturgies, religious forms, conceptions that fitly invest religious feelings, are in this sense *eidola*, things seen. All worship whatsoever must proceed by Symbols, by Idols:—we may say, all Idolatry is comparative, and the worst Idolatry is only *more* idolatrous.'[3]

The only detestable idolatry is that from which the sentiment has departed, which consists only in learned ceremonies, in mechanical repetition of prayers, in decent profession of formulas not understood. The deep veneration of a monk of the twelfth century, prostrated before the relics of St. Edmund, was worth more than the conventional piety and cold philosophical religion of a Protestant of to-day. Whatever the worship, it is the sentiment which gives it its whole value. And this sentiment is that of morality:

'The one end, essence, and use of all religion past, present, and to come, was this only: To keep that same Moral Conscience or Inner Light of ours alive and shining. . . . All religion was here to remind us, better or worse, of what we already know better or worse, of the quite *infinite* difference there is between a Good man and a Bad; to bid us love infinitely the one, abhor and avoid infinitely the other,—strive infinitely to *be* the one, and not to be the other. "All religion issues in due Practical Hero-worship."'[4]

'All true Work is religion; and whatsoever religion is not Work may go and dwell among the Brahmins, Antinomians, Spinning Dervishes, or where it will; with me it shall have no harbour.'[5]

With you it may not; but it has elsewhere. We touch here the English and narrow feature of this German and broad conception. There are many religions which are not moral; there are more still which are not practical. Carlyle would reduce the heart of man to the English

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*
[2] *Ibid.* iv.; *The Hero as Priest.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Past and Present*, bk. iii. ch. xv.; *Morrison Again.*
[5] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. xii.: *Reward.*

sentiment of duty, and his imagination to the English sentiment of respect. The half of human poetry escapes his grasp. For if a part of ourselves raises us to abnegation and virtue, another part leads us to enjoyment and pleasure. Man is pagan as well as Christian; nature has two faces: several races, India, Greece, Italy, have only comprehended the first, and have had for religions merely the adoration of overflowing force and the ecstasy of a grand imagination; or, again, the admiration of harmonious form, with the culture of pleasure, beauty, and happiness.

V.

His criticism of literary works is of the same character and violence, and has the same scope and the same limits, the same principle and the same conclusions, as his criticism of religious works. Carlyle has introduced the great ideas of Hegel and Goethe, and has confined them under the narrow discipline of Puritan sentiment.[1] He considers the poet, the writer, the artist, as an interpreter of 'the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance;' as a revealer of the infinite, as representing his century, his nation, his age: we recognise here all the German formulas. They signify that the artist detects and expresses better than any one, the salient and durable features of the world which surrounds him, so that we might draw from his work a theory of man and of nature, together with a picture of his race and of his time. This discovery has renewed criticism. Carlyle owes to it his finest views, his lessons on Shakspeare and Dante, his studies on Goethe, Johnson, Burns, and Rousseau. Thus, by a natural process, he becomes the herald of German literature; he makes himself the apostle of Goethe; he has praised him with a neophyte's fervour, to the extent of lacking on this subject skill and perspicacity; he calls him a Hero, presents his life as an example to all the men of our century; he will not see his paganism, manifest as it is, and so repellent to a Puritan. Through the same causes, he has made of Jean-Paul, the affected clown, the extravagant humorist, 'a giant,' a sort of prophet; he has heaped eulogy on Novalis and the mystics; he has set the democrat Burns above Byron; he has exalted Johnson, that honest pedant, the most grotesque of literary behemoths. His principle is, that in a work of the mind, form is little, the basis is alone important. As soon as a man has a profound sentiment, a strong conviction, his book is beautiful. A writing, be it what it will, only manifests the soul: if this soul is serious, if it is intimately and habitually shaken by the grave thoughts which ought to preoccupy a soul; if it loves what is good, is devoted, endeavours with its whole effort, without a lingering thought of self-interest or self-love, to publish the truth which strikes it, it has reached its goal. We have nothing to do with the talent; we do not need to be pleased by beautiful forms;

[1] *Lectures on Heroes: Miscellanies, passim.*

our sole object is to find ourselves face to face with the sublime; the whole destiny of man is to perceive heroism; poetry and art have no other employment or merit. You see how far and with what excess Carlyle possesses the Germanic sentiment, why he loves the mystics, humorists prophets, illiterate writers, and men of action, spontaneous poets, all who violate regular beauty through ignorance, brutality, folly, or deliberately. He goes so far as to excuse the rhetoric of Johnson, because Johnson was loyal and sincere; he does not distinguish in him the literary man from the practical: he ceases to see the classic declaimer, a strange compound of Scaliger, Boileau, and La Harpe, majestically decked out in the Ciceronian gown, to see only the religious man of convictions. Such a habit shuts the eyes to one half of things. Carlyle speaks with scornful indifference [1] of modern dilettantism, seems to despise painters, admits no sensible beauty. Wholly on the side of the writers, he neglects the artists; for the source of arts is the sentiment of form; and the greatest artists, the Italians, the Greeks, did not know, like their priests and poets, any beauty beyond that of voluptuousness and force. Thence also it comes that he has no taste for French literature. The exact order, the fine proportions, the perpetual regard for the agreeable and proper, the harmonious structure of clear and consecutive ideas, the delicate picture of society, the perfection of style,—nothing which moves us, has attraction for him. His mode of comprehending life is too far removed from ours. In vain he tries to understand Voltaire; all he can do is to slander him:

'We find no heroism of character in him, from first to last; nay, there is not, that we know of, one great thought in all his six-and-thirty quartos. . . . He sees but a little way into Nature; the mighty All, in its beauty and infinite mysterious grandeur, humbling the small *me* into nothingness, has never even for moments been revealed to him; only this and that other atom of it, and the differences and discrepancies of these two, has he looked into and noted down. His theory of the world, his picture of man and man's life is little; for a poet and philosopher, even pitiful. "The Divine idea, that which lies at the bottom of appearance," was never more invisible to any man. He reads history not with the eyes of a devout seer, or even of a critic, but through a pair of mere anticatholic spectacles. It is not a mighty drama enacted on the theatre of Infinitude, with suns for lamps and Eternity as a background, . . . but a poor wearisome debating-club dispute, spun through ten centuries, between the *Encyclopédie* and the *Sorbonne*. . . . God's Universe is a larger patrimony of St. Peter, from which it were well and pleasant to hunt out the Pope. . . . The still higher praise of having had a right or noble aim cannot be conceded him without many limitations, and may, plausibly enough, be altogether denied. . . . The force necessary for him was nowise a great and noble one; but small, in some respects a mean one, to be nimbly and seasonably put into use. The Ephesian temple, which it had employed many wise heads and strong arms for a lifetime to build, could be *un*built by one madman, in a single hour.'[2]

These are big words; we will not employ the like. I will simply

[1] *Life of Sterling.* [2] *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 4 vols.; ii. *Voltaire*

say, that if a man were to judge Carlyle, as a Frenchman, as he judges Voltaire as an Englishman, he would draw a different picture of Carlyle from that which I am trying here to draw.

VI.

This trade of calumny was in vogue fifty years ago; in fifty more it will probably have altogether ceased. The French are beginning to comprehend the gravity of the Puritans; perhaps the English will end by comprehending the gaiety of Voltaire: the first are labouring to appreciate Shakspeare; the second will doubtless attempt to appreciate Racine. Goethe, the master of all modern minds, knew well how to appreciate both.[1] The critic must add to his natural and national soul five or six artificial and acquired souls, and his flexible sympathy must introduce him to extinct or foreign sentiments. The best fruit of criticism is to detach ourselves from ourselves, to constrain us to make allowance for the surroundings in which we live, to teach us to distinguish objects themselves from the transient appearances, with which our character and our age never fail to clothe them. Each one regards them through glasses of diverse focus and hue, and no one can reach the truth save by taking into account the form and tint which the composition of his glasses imposes on the objects which he sees. Hitherto we have been wrangling and pummelling one another,—this man declaring that things are green, another that they are yellow; others, again, that they are red; each accusing his neighbour of seeing wrong, and being disingenuous. Now, at last, we are learning moral optics; we are finding that the colour is not in the objects, but in ourselves; we pardon our neighbours for seeing differently from us; we recognise that they may see red what to us appears blue, green what to us appears yellow; we can even define the kind of glasses which produces yellow, and the kind which produces green, divine their effects from their nature, predict the tint under which the object we are about to present to them will appear, construct beforehand the system of every mind, and perhaps one day free ourselves from every system. 'As a poet,' said Goethe, 'I am a polytheist; as a naturalist, a pantheist; as a moral man, a deist; and in order to express my mind, I need all these forms.' In fact, all these glasses are serviceable, for they all show us some new aspect of things. The important point is to have not one, but several, to employ each at the suitable moment, not to take into account the particular colour of these glasses, but to know that behind these million moving poetical tints, optics affirm only law-abiding transformations.

§ 4.—Conception of History.

I.

"Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the

[1] See this double praise in *Wilhelm Meister*.

leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.'[1]

Whatever they be, poets, reformers, writers, men of action, revealers, he gives them all a mystical character:

'Such a man is what we call an *original* man; he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. . . . Direct from the Inner Fact of things;—he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that. Hearsays cannot hide it from him; he is blind, homeless, miserable, following hearsays; *it* glares-in upon him. . . . It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things.'[2]

In vain the ignorance of his age and his own imperfections mar the purity of his original vision; he ever attains some immutable and life-giving truth; for this truth he is listened to, and by this truth he is powerful. That which he has discovered is immortal and efficacious:

'The works of a man, bury them under what guano-mountains and obscene owl-droppings you will, do not perish, cannot perish. What of Heroism, what of Eternal Light was in a Man and his Life, is with very great exactness added to the Eternities; remains forever a new divine portion of the Sum of Things.'[3]

'No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life. Religion I find stand upon it. . . . What therefore is loyalty proper, the life-breath of all society, but an effluence of Hero-worship, submissive admiration for the truly great? Society is founded on Hero-worship.'[4]

This feeling is the very bottom of man. It exists even in this levelling and destructive age:

'I seem to see in this indestructibility of Hero-worship the everlasting adamant lower than which the confused wreck of revolutionary things cannot fall.'[5]

II.

We have here a German theory, but transformed, made precise, thickened after the English manner. The Germans said that every nation, period, civilisation, had its *idea;* that is its chief feature, from which the rest were derived; so that philosophy, religion, arts, and morals, all the elements of thought and action, could be deduced from some original and fundamental quality, from which all proceeded and in which all ended. Where Hegel proposed an idea, Carlyle proposes a heroic sentiment. It is more palpable and moral. To complete his escape from the vague, he considers this sentiment in a hero. He must

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*

[2] *Ibid.* ii.; *The Hero as Prophet.*

[3] *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. part x.; *Death of the Protector.*

[4] *Lectures on Heroes.* i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*

[5] *Ibid.*

give to abstractions a body and a soul; he is not at ease in pure conceptions, and wishes to touch a real being.

But this being, as he conceives it, is an abstract of the rest. For, according to him, the hero contains and represents the civilisation in which he is comprised; he has discovered, proclaimed or practised an original conception, and in this his age has followed him. The knowledge of a heroic sentiment thus gives us a knowledge of a whole age. By this method Carlyle has emerged beyond biography. He has rediscovered the grand views of his masters. He has felt, like them, that a civilisation, vast and dispersed as it is over time and space, forms an indivisible whole. He has combined in a system of hero-worship the scattered fragments which Hegel united by a law. He has derived from a common sentiment the events which the Germans derived from a common definition. He has comprehended the deep and distant connection of things, such as bind a great man to his time, such as connect the works of accomplished thought with the stutterings of infant thought, such as link the wise inventions of modern constitutions to the disorderly furies of primitive barbarism:

'Silent, with closed lips, as I fancy them, unconscious that they were specially brave; defying the wild ocean with its monsters, and all men and things;—progenitors of our own Blakes and Nelsons. . . . Hrolf or Rollo, Duke of Normandy, the wild Sea-king, has a share in governing England at this hour.'[1]

'No wild Saint Dominics and Thebaïd Eremites, there had been no melodious Dante; rough Practical Endeavour, Scandinavian and other, from Odin to Walter Raleigh, from Ulfila to Cranmer, enabled Shakspeare to speak. Nay, the finished Poet, I remark sometimes, is a symptom that his epoch itself has reached perfection and is finished; that before long there will be a new epoch, new Reformers needed.'[2]

His great poetic or practical works only publish or apply this dominant idea; the historian makes use of it, to rediscover the primitive sentiment which engenders them, and to form the aggregate conception which unites them.

III.

Hence a new fashion of writing history. Since the heroic sentiment is the cause of the other sentiments, it is to this the historian must devote himself. Since it is the source of civilisation, the mover of revolutions, the master and regenerator of human life, it is in this that he must observe civilisation, revolutions, and human life. Since it is the spring of every movement, it is by this that we shall understand every movement. Let the metaphysicians draw up deductions and formulas, or the politicians expound situations and constitutions. Man is not an inert being, moulded by a constitution, nor a lifeless being expressed by formula; he is an active and living soul, capable of acting, discovering, creating, devoting himself, and before all, of daring; genuine

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity*.
[2] *Ibid.* iv.: *The Hero as Priest*.

history is an epic of heroism. This idea is, in my opinion, as it were, a brilliant light. For men have not done great things without great emotions. The first and sovereign motive of an extraordinary revolution is an extraordinary sentiment. Then we see appear and swell a lofty and all-powerful passion, which has burst the old dykes, and hurled the current of things into a new bed. All starts from this, and it is this which we must observe. Leave metaphysical formulas and political considerations, and regard the inner state of every mind, quit the bare narrative, forget abstract explanations, and study impassioned souls. A revolution is only the birth of a great sentiment. What is this sentiment, how is it bound to others, what is its degree, source, effect, how does it transform the imagination, understanding, common inclinations; what passions feed it, what proportion of folly and reason does it embrace—these are the main questions. If you wish to represent to me the history of Buddhism, you must show me the calm despair of the ascetics who, deadened by the contemplation of the infinite void, and by the expectation of final annihilation, attain in their monotonous quietude the sentiment of universal fraternity. If you wish to represent to me the history of Christianity, you must show me the soul of a Saint John or Saint Paul, the sudden renewal of the conscience, the faith in invisible things, the transformation of a soul penetrated by the presence of a paternal God, the irruption of tenderness, generosity, abnegation, trust, and hope, which rescued the wretches oppressed under the Roman tyranny and decline. To explain a revolution, is to write a partial psychology; the analysis of critics and the divination of artists are the only instruments which can attain to it: if we would have it precise and profound, we must ask it of those who, through their profession or their genius, possess a knowledge of the soul—Shakspeare, Saint-Simon, Balzac, Stendhal. This is why we may occasionally ask it of Carlyle. And there is a history which we may ask of him in preference to all others, that of the revolution which had conscience for its source, which set God in the councils of the state, which imposed strict duty, which provoked severe heroism. The best historian of Puritanism is a Puritan.

IV.

This history of Cromwell, Carlyle's masterpiece, is but a collection of letters and speeches, commented on and united by a continuous narrative. The impression which they leave is extraordinary. Grave constitutional histories hang heavy after this compilation. The author wished to make us comprehend a soul, the soul of Cromwell, the greatest of the Puritans, their chief, their abstract, their hero, and their model. His narrative resembles that of an eye-witness. A covenanter who should have collected letters, scraps of newspapers, and had daily added reflections, interpretations, notes, and anecdotes, might have written just such a book. At last we are face to face with Cromwell. We have his words,

we can hear his tone of voice; we seize, around any object, the circumstances which have produced it; we see him in his tent, in council, with the proper background, with his face and costume: every detail, the most minute, is here. And the sincerity is as great as the sympathy; the biographer confesses his ignorance, the lack of documents, the uncertainty; he is perfectly loyal, though a poet and a sectarian. With him we simultaneously restrain and push our conjectures; and we feel at every step, through our affirmations and our reservations, that we are firmly planting our feet upon the truth. Would that all history were like this, a selection of texts provided with a commentary! I would exchange for such a history all the regular arguments, all the beautiful colourless narrations, of Robertson and Hume. I can verify, whilst reading this, the judgment of the author; I no more think after him, but for myself; the historian does not obtrude himself between me and his subject. I see a fact, and not the account of a fact; the oratorical and personal envelope, with which the narrative covers the truth, disappears; I can touch the truth itself. And this Cromwell, with his Puritans, comes forth from the test, reformed and renewed. We divined pretty well already that he was not a mere man of ambition, a hypocrite, but we took him for a fanatic and hateful wrangler. We considered these Puritans as gloomy madmen, shallow brains, and full of scruples. Let us quit our French and modern ideas, and enter into these souls: we shall find there something else than hypochondria, namely, a grand sentiment—am I a just man? And if God, who is perfect justice, were to judge me at this moment, what sentence would he pass upon me?—Such is the original idea of the Puritans, and through them came the Revolution in England. The feeling of the difference there is between good and evil, had filled for them all time and space, and had become incarnate, and expressed for them, by such words as Heaven and Hell. They were struck by the idea of duty. They examined themselves by this light, without pity or shrinking; they conceived the sublime model of infallible and complete virtue; they were imbued therewith; they drowned in this absorbing thought all worldly prejudices and all inclinations of the senses; they conceived a horror even of imperceptible faults, which an honest man will excuse in himself; they exacted from themselves absolute and continuous perfection, and they entered into life with a fixed resolve to suffer and do all, rather than deviate one step. We laugh at a revolution about surplices and chasubles; there was a sentiment of the divine underneath all these disputes of vestments. These poor folk, shopkeepers and farmers, believed, with all their heart, in a sublime and terrible God, and the manner how to worship Him was not a trifling thing for them:

'Suppose now it were some matter of vital concernment, some transcendent matter (as Divine worship is), about which your whole soul, struck dumb with its excess of feeling, knew not how to *form* itself into utterance at all, and preferred formless silence to any utterance there possible,—what should we say of a man

coming forward to represent or utter it for you in the way of upholsterer-mummery? Such a man,—let him depart swiftly, if he love himself! You have lost your only son; are mute, struck down, without even tears: an importunate man importunately offers to celebrate Funeral Games for him in the manner of the Greeks!'[1]

This has caused the Revolution, and not the Writ of Shipmoney, or any other political vexation.

'You may take my purse, . . . but the Self is mine and God my Maker's'[2]

And the same sentiment which made them rebels, made them conquerors. Men could not understand how discipline could survive in an army in which an inspired corporal would reproach a lukewarm general. They thought it strange that generals, who sought the Lord with tears, had learned administration and strategy in the Bible. They wondered that madmen could be men of business. The truth is, that they were not madmen, but men of business. The whole difference between them and practical men whom we know, is that they had a conscience; this conscience was their flame; mysticism and dreams were but the smoke. They sought the true, the just; and their long prayers, their nasal preachings, their Bible criticisms, their tears, their anguish, only mark the sincerity and ardour with which they applied themselves to the search. They read their duty in themselves; the Bible only aided them. At need they did violence to it, when they wished to verify by texts the suggestions of their own hearts. It was this sentiment of duty which united, inspired, and sustained them, which made their discipline, courage, and boldness; which raised to ancient heroism Hutchinson, Milton, and Cromwell; which instigated all decisive deeds, grand resolves, marvellous successes, the declaration of war, the trial of the king, the purge of Parliament, the humiliation of Europe, the protection of Protestantism, the sway of the seas. These men are the true heroes of England; they display, in high relief, the original characteristics and noblest features of England—practical piety, the rule of conscience, manly resolution, indomitable energy. They founded England, in spite of the corruption of the Stuarts and the relaxation of modern manners, by the exercise of duty, by the practice of justice, by obstinate toil, by vindication of right, by resistance to oppression, by the conquest of liberty, by the repression of vice. They founded Scotland, they founded the United States: at this day they are, by their descendants, founding Australia and colonising the world. Carlyle is so much their brother, that he excuses or admires their excesses—the execution of the king, the mutilation of Parliament, their intolerance, inquisition, the despotism of Cromwell, the theocracy of Knox. He sets them before us as models, and judges both past and present by them alone.

V.

Hence he saw nothing but evil in the French Revolution. He

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, vi.; *The Hero as King*. [2] *Ibid.*

judges it as unjustly as he judges Voltaire, and for the same reasons. He understands our manner of acting no better than our manner of thinking. He looks for Puritan sentiment; and, as he does not find it, he condemns us. The idea of duty, the religious spirit, self-government, the authority of an austere conscience, can alone, in his opinion, reform a corrupt society; and none of all these are to be met with in French society. The philosophy which has produced and guided the Revolution was simply destructive, proclaiming no other gospel but, 'that a lie cannot be believed! Philosophy knows only this: Her other relief is mainly that in spiritual, supra-sensual matters, no belief is possible.' The theory of the *Rights of Man*, borrowed from Rousseau, is only a logical game, a pedantry almost as opportune as a 'Theory of Irregular Verbs.' The manners in vogue were the epicurism of Faublas. The morality in vogue was the promise of universal happiness. Incredulity, hollow rant, sensuality, were the mainsprings of this reformation. Men let loose their instincts and overturned the barriers. They replaced corrupt authority by unchecked anarchy. In what could a jacquerie of brutalised peasants, impelled by atheistical arguments, end?

'For ourselves, we answer that French Revolution means here the open violent Rebellion, and Victory, of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt, worn-out Authority.[1] . . .

'So thousandfold complex a Society ready to burst up from its infinite depths; and these men its rulers and healers, without life-rule for themselves—other life-rule than a Gospel according to Jean Jacques! To the wisest of them, what we must call the wisest, man is properly an accident under the sky. Man is without duty round him, except it be to make the Constitution. He is without Heaven above him, or Hell beneath him; he has no God in the world.

'While hollow languor and vacuity is the lot of the upper, and want and stagnation of the lower, and universal misery is very certain, what other thing is certain? . . . What will remain? The five unsatiated senses will remain, the sixth insatiable sense (of vanity); the whole *dæmoniac* nature of man will remain.

'Man is not what we call a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is too enormous. . . . (He cannot subsist) except by girding himself together for continual endeavour and endurance.'[2]

But set the good beside the evil; put down virtues beside vices! These sceptics believed in demonstrated truth, and would have her alone for mistress. These logicians founded society only on justice, and risked their lives rather than renounce an established theorem. These epicureans embraced in their sympathies entire humanity. These furious men, these workmen, these hungry, threadbare peasants, fought in the van for humanitarian interests and abstract principles. Generosity and enthusiasm abounded in France, as well as in England; acknowledge them under a form which is not English. These men were devoted to abstract truth, as the Puritan to divine truth; they followed philosophy, as the Puritans followed religion; they had for their aim universal sal-

[1] *The French Revolution*, i. bk. vi. ch. i.; *Make the Constitution.* [2] *Ibid.* i

vation, as the Puritans had individual salvation. They fought against evil in society, as the Puritans fought it in the soul. They were generous, as the Puritans were virtuous. They had, like them, a heroism, but sympathetic, sociable, ready to proselytise, which reformed Europe, whilst the English one only served England.

VI.

This extravagant Puritanism, which revolted Carlyle against the French Revolution, revolts him against modern England:

'We have forgotten God;—in the most modern dialect and very truth of the matter, we have taken up the Fact of this Universe as it *is not*. We have quietly closed our eyes to the eternal Substance of things, and opened them only to the Shows and Shams of things. We quietly believe this Universe to be intrinsically a great unintelligible PERHAPS; extrinsically, clear enough, it is a great, most extensive Cattlefold and Workhouse, with most extensive Kitchen-ranges, Dining-tables,—whereat he is wise who can find a place! All the Truth of this Universe is uncertain; only the profit and loss of it, the pudding and praise of it, are and remain very visible to the practical man.

'There is no longer any God for us! God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary Expediency; the Heavens overarch us only as an Astronomical Time-keeper; a butt for Herschel-telescopes to shoot science at, to shoot sentimentalities at:—in our and old Jonson's dialect, man has lost the *soul* out of him; and now, after the due period,—begins to find the want of it! This is verily the plague-spot; centre of the universal Social Gangrene, threatening all modern things with frightful death. To him that will consider it, here is the stem, with its roots and taproot, with its world-wide upas-boughs and accursed poison-exudations, under which the world lies writhing in atrophy and agony. You touch the focal-centre of all our disease, of our frightful nosology of diseases, when you lay your hand on this. There is no religion; there is no God; man has lost his soul, and vainly seeks antiseptic salt. Vainly: in killing Kings, in passing Reform bills, in French Revolutions, Manchester Insurrections, is found no remedy. The foul elephantine leprosy, alleviated for an hour, reappears in new force and desperateness next hour.'[1]

Since the return of the Stuarts, we are utilitarians or sceptics. We believe only in observation, statistics, gross and concrete truths; or else we doubt, half believe, on hearsay, with reserve. We have no moral convictions, and we have only floating convictions. We have lost the mainspring of action; we no longer set duty in the midst of our resolves, as the sole and undisturbed foundation of life; we are caught by all kinds of little experimental and positive receipts, and we amuse ourselves with all kinds of pretty pleasures, well chosen and arranged. We are egotists or dilettanti. We no longer look on life as an august temple, but as a machine for solid profits, or as a hall for refined amusements. We have our rich, our working-classes, our bankers, who preach the gospel of gold; we have gentlemen, dandies, lords, who preach the gospel of manners. We overwork ourselves to heap up guineas,

[1] *Past and Present*, bk. iii. ch. i.; *Phenomena*.

or else we make ourselves insipid to attain an elegant dignity. Our hell is no longer, as under Cromwell, the dread of being found guilty before the just Judge, but the dread of making a bad speculation, or of transgressing etiquette. We have for our aristocracy greedy shopkeepers, who reduce life to a calculation of profits and prices; and for our amateurs, whose great business is to preserve the game on their estates. We are no longer governed. Our government has no other ambition than to preserve the public peace, and to get in the taxes. Our constitution lays it down as a principle, that, in order to discover the true and the good, we have only to make two million imbeciles vote. Our Parliament is a great word-mill, where plotters out-bawl each other for the sake of making a noise.[1]

Under this thin cloak of conventionalities and phrases, ominously growls the irresistible democracy. England perishes if she ever ceases to be able to sell a yard of cotton at a farthing less than others. At the least check in the manufactures, 1,500,000 workmen,[2] without work, live upon public charity. The formidable masses, given up to the hazards of industry, urged by lust, impelled by hunger, oscillates between the fragile cracking barriers; we are nearing the final breaking-up, which will be open anarchy, and the democracy will heave amidst the ruins, until the sentiment of the divine and of duty has rallied them around the worship of heroism; until it has discovered the means of calling to power the most virtuous and the most capable;[3] until it has given its guidance into their hands, instead of making them subject to its caprices; until it has recognised and reverenced its Luther and its Cromwell, its priest and its king.

[1] 'It is his effort and desire to teach this and the other thinking British man that said finale, the advent namely of actual open Anarchy, cannot be distant, now when virtual disguised Anarchy, long-continued, and waxing daily, has got to such a height; and that the one method of staving off the fatal consummation, and steering towards the Continents of the Future, lies not in the direction of reforming Parliament, but of what he calls reforming Downing Street; a thing infinitely urgent to be begun, and to be strenuously carried on. To find a Parliament more and more the express image of the People, could, unless the People chanced to be wise as well as miserable, give him no satisfaction. Not this at all; but to find some sort of *King*, made in the image of God, who could a little achieve for the People, if not their spoken wishes, yet their dumb wants, and what they would at last find to have been their instinctive *will*,—which is a far different matter usually, in this babbling world of ours.'—*Parliaments*, in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.

'A king or leader, then, in all bodies of men, there must be; be their work what it may, there is one man here who by character, faculty, position, is fittest of all to do it.

'He who is to be my ruler, whose will is to be higher than my will, was chosen for me in Heaven. Neither, except in such obedience to the Heaven-chosen, is freedom so much as conceivable.'

[2] Official Report, 1842. [3] *Latter-Day Pamphlets; Parliaments.*

VII.

Now-a-days, doubtless, in the whole civilised world, democracy is swelling or overflowing, and all the channels in which it flows, are fragile or temporary. But it is a strange offer to present for its issue the fanaticism and tyranny of the Puritans. The society and spirit which Carlyle proposes, as models for human nature, lasted but an hour, and could not last longer. The asceticism of the Republic produced the debauchery of the Restoration; the Harrisons brought the Rochesters, the Bunyans raised the Hobbes'; and the sectarians, in instituting the despotism of enthusiasm, established by reaction the authority of the positive mind and the worship of gross pleasure. Exaltation is not stable, and it cannot be exacted from man, without injustice and danger. The sympathetic generosity of the French Revolution ended in the cynicism of the Directory and the slaughters of the Empire. The chivalric and poetic piety of the great Spanish monarchy emptied Spain of men and of thoughts. The primacy of genius, taste, and intellect in Italy, reduced her at the end of a century to voluptuous sloth and political slavery. 'What makes the angel makes the beast;' and perfect heroism, like all excesses, ends in stupor. Human nature has its explosions, but with intervals: mysticism is serviceable but when it is short. Violent circumstances produce extreme conditions; great evils are necessary in order to raise great men, and you are obliged to look for shipwrecks when you wish to behold rescuers. If enthusiasm is beautiful, its results and its origins are sad; it is but a crisis, and a healthy state is better. In this respect Carlyle himself may serve for a proof. There is perhaps less genius in Macaulay than in Carlyle; but when we have fed for some time on this exaggerated and demoniac style, this marvellous and sickly philosophy, this contorted and prophetic history, these sinister and furious politics, we gladly return to the continuous eloquence, to the vigorous reasoning, to the moderate prognostications, to the demonstrated theories, of the generous and solid mind which Europe has just lost, who brought honour to England, and whose place none can fill.

CHAPTER V.

Philosophy.—Stuart Mill.

I. Philosophy in England—Organization of positive science—Lack of general ideas.

II. Why metaphysics are wanting—Authority of Religion.

III. Indications and splendour of free thought—New exegesis—Stuart Mill—His works—His order of mind—To what school of philosophers he belongs—Value of higher speculation in human civilisation.

§ 1.—Exposition of Mill's Philosophy.

I. Object of logic—Wherein it is distinguished from psychology and metaphysics.

II. What is a judgment?—What do we know of the external and inner worlds?—The whole object of science is to add or connect facts.

III. The system based on this view of the nature of our knowledge.

IV. Theory of definitions—Its importance—Refutation of the old theory—There are no definitions of things, but of names only.

V. Theory of proof—Ordinary theory—Its refutation—What is the really fundamental part of a syllogism?

VI. Theory of axioms—Ordinary theory—Its refutation—Axioms are only truths of experience of a certain class.

VII. Theory of induction—The cause of a fact is only its invariable antecedent—Experience alone proves the stability of the laws of nature—What is a law?—By what methods are laws discovered?—The methods of agreement, of differences, of residues, of concomitant variations.

VIII. Examples and applications—Theory of dew.

IX. Deduction—Its province and method.

X. Comparison of the methods of induction and deduction—Ancient employment of the first—Modern use of the second—Sciences requiring the first—Sciences requiring the second—Positive character of Mill's work—His predecessors.

XI. Limits of our knowledge—It is not certain that all events happen according to laws—Chance in nature.

§ 2.—Discussion.

I. Agreement of this philosophy with the English mind—Alliance of the positive and religious spirits—By what faculty we arrive at the knowledge of causation.

II. There are no substances or forces, but only facts and laws—Abstraction—Its nature—Its part in science.

III. Theory of definitions—They explain the abstract generating elements of things.

IV. Theory of proof—The basis of proof in syllogism is an abstract law.

V. Theory of axioms—Axioms are relations between abstract truths—They may be reduced to the axiom of identity.

VI. Theory of induction—Its methods are of elimination or abstraction.

VII. The two great operations of the mind, experience and abstraction—The two great manifestations of things, sensible facts and abstract laws—Why we ought to pass from the first to the second—Meaning and extent of the axiom of causation.

VIII. It is possible to arrive at the knowledge of first elements—Error of German metaphysicians—They have neglected the element of chance, and of local perturbations—What might be known by a philosophising ant—Idea and limits of metaphysics—Its state in the three thinking nations—A morning in Oxford.[1]

I.

WHEN at Oxford some years ago, during the meeting of the British Association, I met, amongst the few students still in residence, a young Englishman, a man of intelligence, with whom I became intimate. He took me in the evening to the New Museum, well filled with

[1] M. Taine has published this 'Study on Mill' separately, and preceded it by the following note, as a preface:—'When this Study first appeared, Mr. Mill did me the honour to write to me that it would not be possible to give in a few pages a more exact and complete notion of the contents of his work, considered as a body of philosophical teaching. "But," he added, "I think you are wrong in regarding the views I adopt as especially English. They were so in the first half of the eighteenth century, from the time of Locke to that of the reaction against Hume. This reaction, beginning in Scotland, assumed long ago the German form, and ended by prevailing universally. When I wrote my book, I stood almost alone in my opinions; and though they have met with a degree of sympathy which I by no means expected, we may still count in England twenty *à priori* and spiritualist philosophers for every partisan of the doctrine of Experience."

'This remark is very true. I myself could have made it, having been brought up in the doctrines of Scotch philosophy and the writings of Reid. I simply answer, that there are philosophers whom we do not count, and that all such, whether English or not, spiritualist or not, may be neglected without much harm. Once in a half century, or perhaps in a century, or two centuries, some thinker appears; Bacon and Hume in England, Descartes and Condillac in France, Kant and Hegel in Germany. At other times the stage is unoccupied, or ordinary men come forward, and offer the public that which the public likes—Sensualists or Idealists, according to the tendency of the day, with sufficient instruction and skill to play leading parts, and enough capacity to re-set old airs, well drilled in the works of their predecessors, but destitute of real invention—simple executant musicians, who stand in the place of composers. In Europe, at present, the stage is a blank. The Germans adapt and alter effete French materialism. The French listen from habit, but somewhat wearily and distractedly, to the scraps of melody and eloquent commonplace which their instructors have repeated to them for the last thirty years. In this deep silence, and from among these dull mediocrities, a master comes forward to speak. Nothing of the sort has been seen since Hegel

specimens. Here short lectures were delivered, new models of machinery were set to work; ladies were present and took an interest in the experiments; on the last day, full of enthusiasm, *God save the Queen* was sung. I admired this zeal, this solidity of mind, this organisation of science, these voluntary subscriptions, this aptitude for association and for labour, this great machine pushed on by so many arms, and so well fitted to accumulate, criticise, and classify facts. But yet, in this abundance, there was a void; when I read the Transactions, I thought I was present at a congress of heads of manufactories. All these learned men verified details and exchanged recipes. It was as though I listened to foremen, busy in communicating their processes for tanning leather or dyeing cotton: general ideas were wanting. I used to regret this to my friend; and in the evening, by his lamp, amidst that great silence in which the university town lay wrapped, we both tried to discover its reasons.

II.

One day I said to him: You lack philosophy—I mean, what the Germans call metaphysics. You have learned men, but you have no thinkers. Your God impedes you. He is the Supreme Cause, and you dare not reason on causes, out of respect for him. He is the most important personage in England, and I see clearly that he merits his position; for he forms part of your constitution, he is the guardian of your morality, he judges in final appeal on all questions whatsoever, he replaces with advantage the prefects and gendarmes with whom the nations on the Continent are still encumbered. Yet, this high rank has the inconvenience of all official positions; it produces a cant, prejudices, intolerance, and courtiers. Here, close by us, is poor Mr. Max Müller, who, in order to acclimatise the study of Sanscrit, was compelled to discover in the Vedas the worship of a moral God, that is to say, the religion of Paley and Addison. Some time ago, in London, I read a proclamation of the Queen, forbidding people to play cards, even in their own houses, on Sundays. It seems that, if I were robbed, I could not bring my thief to justice without taking a preliminary religious oath; for the judge has been known to send a complainant away who refused to take the oath, deny him justice, and insult him into the bargain. Every year, when we read the Queen's speech in your papers, we find there the compulsory mention of Divine Providence, which comes in mechanically, like the apostrophe to the immortal gods on the fourth page of a rhetorical declamation; and you remember that once, the pious phrase having been omitted, a second communication was made to Parliament for the express purpose of supplying it. All these cavillings and pedantry indicate to my mind a celestial monarchy; naturally it resembles all others; I mean that it relies more willingly on tradition and custom than on examination and reason. A monarchy never invited men to verify its credentials. As yours is, however, useful, well adapted to you, and moral, you are not revolted

by it; you submit to it without difficulty, you are, at heart, attached to it; you would fear, in touching it, to disturb the constitution and morality. You leave it in the clouds, amidst public homage. You fall back upon yourselves, confine yourselves to matters of fact, to minute dissections, to experiments in the laboratory. You go culling plants and collecting shells. Science is deprived of its head; but all is for the best, for practical life is improved, and dogma remains intact.

III.

You are truly French, he answered; you leap over facts, and all at once find yourself settled in a theory. I assure you that there are thinkers amongst us, and not far from hence, at Christ Church, for instance. One of them, the professor of Greek, has spoken so deeply on inspiration, the creation and final causes, that he is out of favour. Look at this little collection which has recently appeared, *Essays and Reviews*; your philosophic freedom of the last century, the latest conclusions of geology and cosmogony, the boldness of German exegesis, are here in abstract. Some things are wanting, amongst others the waggeries of Voltaire, the misty jargon of Germany, and the prosaic coarseness of Comte; to my mind, the loss is small. Wait twenty years, and you will find in London the ideas of Paris and Berlin.—But they will still be the ideas of Paris and Berlin. Whom have you that is original?—Stuart Mill.—Who is he?—A political writer. His little book *On Liberty* is as admirable as Rousseau's *Contrat Social* is bad.—That is a bold assertion.—No, for Mill decides as strongly for the independence of the individual as Rousseau for the despotism of the State.—Very well, but that is not enough to make a philosopher. What besides is he?—An economist who goes beyond his science, and subordinates production to man, instead of man to production.—Well, but this is not enough to make a philosopher. Is he anything else?—A logician. Very good; but of what school?—Of his own. I told you he was original.—Is he Hegelian?—By no means; he is too fond of facts and proofs.—Does he follow Port-Royal?—Still less; he is too well acquainted with modern sciences.—Does he imitate Condillac?—Certainly not; Condillac has only taught him to write well.—Who, then, are his friends?—Locke and Comte in the first rank; then Hume and Newton.—Is he a system-monger, a speculative reformer?—He has too much sense for that; he only arranges the best theories, and explains the best methods. He does not attitudinise majestically in the character of a restorer of science; he does not declare, like your Germans, that his book will open up a new era for humanity. He proceeds gradually, somewhat slowly, often creepingly, through a multitude of particular facts. He excels in giving precision to an idea, in disentangling a principle, in discovering it amongst a number of different facts; in refuting, distinguishing, arguing. He has the astuteness, patience, method, and sagacity of a lawyer.—Very well, you admit that I was

right. A lawyer, an ally of Locke, Newton, Comte, and Hume; we have here only English philosophy; but no matter. Has he reached a grand conception of the universe?—Yes.—Has he an individual and complete idea of nature and the mind?—Yes.—Has he combined the operations and discoveries of the intellect under a single principle which puts them all in a new light?—Yes; but we have to discover this principle.—That is your business, and I hope you will undertake it.—But I shall fall into abstract generalities.—There is no harm in that?—But this close reasoning will be like a quick-set hedge.—We will prick our fingers with it. But three men out of four would cast aside such speculations as idle.—So much the worse for them. For in what does the life of a nation or a century consist, except in the formation of such theories? We are not thoroughly men unless so engaged. If some dweller in another planet were to come down here to ask us the nature of our race, we should have to show him the five or six great ideas which we have formed of the mind and the world. That alone would give him the measure of our intelligence. Expound to me your theory, and I shall go away better instructed than after having seen the masses of brick, which you call London and Manchester.

1.—Experience.

I.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning, like logicians. Mill has written on logic. What is logic? It is a science. What is its object? The sciences; for, suppose that you have traversed the universe, and that you know it thoroughly, stars, earth, sun, heat, gravity, chemical affinities, the species of minerals, geological revolutions, plants, animals, human events, all that classifications and theories explain and embrace, there still remain these classifications and theories to be learnt. Not only is there an order of beings, but also an order of the thoughts which represent them; not only plants and animals, but also botany and zoology; not only lines, surfaces, volumes, and numbers, but also geometry and arithmetic. Sciences, then, are as real things as facts themselves, and therefore, as well as facts, become the subject of study. We can analyse them as we analyse facts, investigate their elements, composition, order, relations, and object. There is, therefore, a science of sciences; this science is called logic, and is the subject of Mill's work. It is no part of logic to analyse the operations of the mind, memory, the association of ideas, external perception, etc.; that is the business of psychology. We do not discuss the value of such operations, the veracity of our consciousness, the absolute certainty of our elementary knowledge; this belongs to metaphysics. We suppose our faculties to be at work, and we admit their primary discoveries. We take the instrument as nature has provided it, and we trust to its accuracy. We leave to others the task of taking its mechanism to pieces, and the

curiosity which criticises its results. Setting out from its primitive operations, we enquire how they are added to each other; how they are combined; how one is convertible into another; how, by dint of additions, combinations, and transformations, they finally compose a system of connected and increasing truths. We construct a theory of science, as others construct theories of vegetation, of the mind, or of numbers. Such is the idea of logic; and it is plain that it has, as other sciences, a real subject-matter, its distinct province, its manifest importance, its special method, and a certain future.

II.

Having premised so much, we observe that all these sciences which form the subject of logic, are but collections of propositions, and that each proposition merely connects or separates a subject and an attribute, that is, two names, a quality and a substance; that is to say, a thing and another thing. We must then ask what we understand by a thing, what we indicate by a name; in other words, what it is we recognise in objects, what we connect or separate, what is the subject-matter of all our propositions and all our science. There is a point in which all our several items of knowledge resemble one another. There is a common element which, continually repeated, constitutes all our ideas. There is, as it were, a minute primitive crystal which, indefinitely and variously added to itself, forms the whole mass, and which, once known, teaches us beforehand the laws and composition of the complex bodies which it has formed.

Now, when we attentively consider the idea which we form of anything, what do we find in it? Take first substances, that is to say, Bodies and Minds.[1] This table is brown, long, wide, three feet high, judging by the eye: that is, it forms a little spot in the field of vision; in other words, it produces a certain sensation on the optic nerve. It weighs ten pounds: that is, it would require to lift it an effort less than for a weight of eleven pounds, and greater than for a weight of

[1] 'It is certain, then, that a part of our notion of a body consists of the notion of a number of sensations of our own or of other sentient beings, habitually occurring simultaneously. My conception of the table at which I am writing is compounded of its visible form and size, which are complex sensations of sight; its tangible form and size, which are complex sensations of our organs of touch and of our muscles; its weight, which is also a sensation of touch and of the muscles; its colour, which is a sensation of sight; its hardness, which is a sensation of the muscles; its composition, which is another word for all the varieties of sensation which we receive, under various circumstances, from the wood of which it is made; and so forth. All or most of these various sensations frequently are, and, as we learn by experience, always might be, experienced simultaneously, or in many different orders of succession, at our own choice: and hence the thought of any one of them makes us think of the others, and the whole becomes mentally amalgamated into one mixed state of consciousness, which, in the language of Locke and Hartley, is termed a Complex Idea.'—MILL's *System of Logic*, 4th ed. 2 vols., i. 62.

nine pounds; in other words, it produces a certain muscular sensation. It is hard and square, which means that, if first pushed, and then run over by the hand, it will excite two distinct kinds of muscular sensations. And so on. When I examine closely what I know of it, I find that I know nothing else except the impressions it makes upon me. Our idea of a body comprises nothing else than this: we know nothing of it but the sensations it excites in us; we determine it by the nature, number, and order of these sensations; we know nothing of its inner nature nor whether it has one; we simply affirm that it is the unknown cause of these sensations. When we say that a body has existed in the absence of our sensations, we mean simply that if, during that time, we had been within reach of it, we should have had sensations which we have not had. We never define it save by our present or past, future or possible, complex or simple impressions. This is so true, that philosophers like Berkeley have maintained, with some show of truth, that matter is a creature of the imagination, and that the whole universe of sense is reducible to an order of sensations. It is at least so, as far as our knowledge is concerned; and the judgments which compose our sciences, have reference only to the impressions by which things are manifested to us.

So, again, with the mind. We may well admit that there is in us a soul, an 'ego,' a subject or recipient of our sensations, and of our other modes of being, distinct from those sensations and modes of existence; but we know nothing of it. Mr. Mill says:

'For, as our conception of a body is that of an unknown exciting cause of sensations, so our conception of a mind is that of an unknown recipient, or percipient, of them; and not of them alone, but of all our other feelings. As body is the mysterious something which excites the mind to feel, so mind is the mysterious something which feels, and thinks. It is unnecessary to give in the case of mind, as we gave in the case of matter, a particular statement of the sceptical system by which its existence as a Thing in itself, distinct from the series of what are denominated its states, is called in question. But it is necessary to remark, that on the inmost nature of the thinking principle, as well as on the inmost nature of matter, we are, and with our faculties must always remain, entirely in the dark. All which we are aware of, even in our own minds, is a certain "thread of consciousness;" a series of feelings, that is, of sensations, thoughts, emotions, and volitions, more or less numerous and complicated.'[1]

We have no clearer idea of mind than of matter; we can say nothing more about it than about matter. So that substances, of whatever kind, bodies or minds, within or without us, are never for us more than tissues, more or less complex, more or less regular, of which our impressions and modes of being form all the threads.

This is still more evident in the case of attributes than of substances. When I say that snow is white, I mean that, when snow is presented to my sight, I have the sensation of whiteness. When I say that fire

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 68.

is hot, I mean that, when near the fire, I have the sensation of heat. We call a mind devout, superstitious, meditative, or gay, simply meaning that the ideas, the emotions, the volitions, designated by these words, recur frequently in the series of its modes of being.[1] When we say that bodies are heavy, divisible, moveable, we mean simply that, left to themselves, they will fall; when cut, they will separate; or when pushed, they will move: that is, under such and such circumstances they will produce such and such a sensation in our muscles, or our sight. An attribute always designates a mode of being, or a series of our modes of being. In vain we disguise these modes by grouping, concealing them under abstract words, dividing and transforming them, so that we are frequently puzzled to recognise them: whenever we look at the bottom of our words and ideas, we find them, and nothing but them. Mill says:

'Take the following example: A generous person is worthy of honour. Who would expect to recognise here a case of coexistence between phenomena? But so it is. The attribute which causes a person to be termed generous, is ascribed to him on the ground of states of his mind, and particulars of his conduct; both are phenomena; the former are facts of internal consciousness, the latter, so far as distinct from the former, are physical facts, or perceptions of the senses. Worthy of honour, admits of a similar analysis. Honour, as here used, means a state of approving and admiring emotion, followed on occasion by corresponding outward acts. "Worthy of honour" connotes all this, together with an approval of the act

[1] 'Every attribute of a mind consists either in being itself affected in a certain way, or affecting other minds in a certain way. Considered in itself, we can predicate nothing of it but the series of its own feelings. When we say of any mind, that it is devout, or superstitious, or meditative, or cheerful, we mean that the ideas, emotions, or volitions implied in those words, form a frequently recurring part of the series of feelings, or states of consciousness, which fill up the sentient existence of that mind.

'In addition, however, to those attributes of a mind which are grounded on its own states of feeling, attributes may also be ascribed to it, in the same manner as to a body, grounded on the feelings which it excites in other minds. A mind does not, indeed, like a body, excite sensations, but it may excite thoughts or emotions. The most important example of attributes ascribed on this ground, is the employment of terms expressive of approbation or blame. When, for example, we say of any character, or (in other words) of any mind, that it is admirable, we mean that the contemplation of it excites the sentiment of admiration; and indeed somewhat more, for the word implies that we not only feel admiration, but approve that sentiment in ourselves. In some cases, under the semblance of a single attribute, two are really predicated: one of them, a state of the mind itself; the other, a state with which other minds are affected by thinking of it. As when we say of any one that he is generous. The word generosity expresses a certain state of mind, but being a term of praise, it also expresses that this state of mind excites in us another mental state, called approbation. The assertion made, therefore, is twofold, and of the following purport: Certain feelings form habitually a part of this person's sentient existence; and the idea of those feelings of his, excites the sentiment of approbation in ourselves or others.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 80.

of showing honour. All these are phenomena; states of internal consciousness, accompanied or followed by physical facts. When we say, A generous person is worthy of honour, we affirm coexistence between the two complicated phenomena connoted by the two terms respectively. We affirm, that wherever and whenever the inward feelings and outward facts implied in the word generosity, have place, then and there the existence and manifestation of an inward feeling, honour, would be followed in our minds by another inward feeling, approval.'[1]

In vain we turn about as we please, we remain still in the same circle Whether the object be an attribute or a substance, complex or abstract, compound or simple, its material is to us always the same; it is made up only of our modes of being. Our mind is to nature what a thermometer is to a boiler: we define the properties of nature by the impressions of our mind, as we indicate the conditions of the boiling water by the changes of the thermometer. Of both we know but conditions and changes; we make up both of isolated and transient facts; a thing is for us but an aggregate of phenomena. These are the sole elements of our knowledge: consequently the whole effort of science will be to add or to link facts to facts.

III.

This brief phrase is the abstract of the whole system. Let us master it, for it explains all Mill's theories. He has defined and innovated everything from this starting-point. In all forms and all degrees of knowledge, he has recognised only the knowledge of facts, and of their relations.

Now we know that logic has two corner-stones, the Theories of Definition and of Proof. From the days of Aristotle logicians have spent their time in polishing them. They have only dared to touch them respectfully, as if they were sacred. At most, from time to time, some innovator ventured to turn them over cautiously, to put them in a better light. Mill shapes, cuts, turns them over, and replaces them both in a similar manner and by the same means.

IV.

I am quite aware that now-a-days men laugh at those who reason on definitions; the laughers deserve to be laughed at. There is no theory more fertile in universal and important results; it is the root by which the whole tree of human science grows and lives. For to define things is to mark out their nature. To introduce a new idea of definition is to introduce a new idea of the nature of things; it is to tell us what beings are, of what they are composed, into what elements they are capable of being resolved. In this lies the merit of these dry speculations; the philosopher seems occupied with arranging mere formulas; the fact is, that in them he encloses the universe.

Take, say logicians, an animal, a plant, a feeling, a geometrical

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 110.

figure, an object or group of objects of any kind. Doubtless the object has its properties, but it has also its essence. It is manifested to the outer world by an indefinite number of effects and qualities; but all these modes of being are the results or products of its inner nature. There is within it a certain hidden substratum which alone is primitive and important, without which it can neither exist nor be conceived, and which constitutes its being and our notion of it.[1] They call the propositions which denote this essence definitions, and assert that the best part of our knowledge consists of such propositions.

On the other hand, Mill says that these kinds of propositions teach us nothing; they show the mere sense of a word, and are purely verbal.[2] What do I learn by being told that man is a rational animal, or that a triangle is a space contained by three lines? The first part of such a phrase expresses by an abbreviative word what the second part expresses in a developed phrase. You tell me the same thing twice over; you put the same fact into two different expressions; you do not add one fact to another, but you go from one fact to its equivalent. Your proposition is not instructive. You might collect a million such, my mind would remain entirely void; I should have read a dictionary, but not have acquired a single piece of knowledge. Instead of saying that essential propositions are important, and those relating to qualities merely accessory, you ought to say that the first are accessory, and the second important. I learn nothing by being told that a circle is a figure formed by the revolution of a straight line about one of its points as centre; I do learn something when told that the chords which subtend equal arcs in the circle are themselves equal, or that three given points determine the circumference. What we call the nature of a being is the connected system of facts which constitute that being. The nature of a carnivorous mammal consists in the fact that the property of giving milk, and all its implied peculiarities of structure, are combined with the possession of sharp teeth, instincts of prey, and the corresponding faculties. Such are the elements which compose its nature. They are facts linked together as mesh to mesh in a net. We perceive a few of

[1] According to idealist logicians, this being is arrived at by examining our notion of it; and the idea, on analysis, reveals the essence. According to the classifying school, we arrive at the being by placing the object in its group, and the notion is defined by stating the genus and the difference. Both agree in believing that we are capable of grasping the essence.

[2] 'An essential proposition, then, is one which is purely verbal; which asserts of a thing under a particular name, only what is asserted of it in the fact of calling it by that name; and which therefore either gives no information, or gives it respecting the name, not the thing. Non-essential or accidental propositions, on the contrary, may be called Real Propositions, in opposition to Verbal. They predicate of a thing, some fact not involved in the signification of the name by which the proposition speaks of it; some attribute not connoted by that name.' MILL'S *Logic*, i. 127.

them; and we know that, beyond our present knowledge and our future experience, the network extends to infinitely its interwoven and manifold threads. The essence or nature of a being is the indefinite sum of its properties. Mill says:

'The definition, they say, unfolds the nature of the thing: but no definition can unfold its whole nature; and every proposition in which any quality whatever is predicated of the thing, unfolds some part of its nature. The true state of the case we take to be this. All definitions are of names, and of names only; but in some definitions it is clearly apparent, that nothing is intended except to explain the meaning of the word; while in others, besides explaining the meaning of the word, it is intended to be implied that there exists a thing, corresponding to the word.'[1]

Abandon, then, the vain hope of eliminating from properties some primitive and mysterious being, the source and abstract of the whole; leave entities to Duns Scotus; do not fancy that, by probing your ideas in the German fashion, by classifying objects according to genera and species like the schoolmen, by reviving the nominalism of the Middle Ages or the riddles of Hegelian metaphysics, you will ever supply the want of experience. There are no definitions of things; if there are definitions, they only define names. No phrase can tell me what a horse is; but there are phrases which will inform me what is meant by these five letters. No phrase can exhaust the inexhaustible sum of qualities which make up a being; but several phrases may point out the facts corresponding to a word. In this case definition is possible, because we can always make an analysis, which will enable us to pass from the abstract and summary term to the attributes which it represents, and from these attributes to the inner or concrete feelings which constitute their foundation. From the term 'dog' it enables us to rise to the attributes 'mammiferous,' 'carnivorous,' and others which it represents; and from these attributes to the sensations of sight, of touch, of the dissecting knife, on which they are founded. It reduces the compound to the simple, the derived to the primitive. It brings back our knowledge to its origin. It transforms words into facts. If some definitions, such as those of geometry, seem capable of giving rise to long sequences of new truths,[2] it is because, in addition to the explanation of a word, they contain the affirmation of a thing. In the definition of a triangle

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 162.

[2] 'The definition above given of a triangle obviously comprises not one, but two propositions, perfectly distinguishable. The one is, "There may exist a figure bounded by three straight lines;" the other, "And this figure may be termed a triangle." The former of these propositions is not a definition at all; the latter is a mere nominal definition, or explanation of the use and application of a term. The first is susceptible of truth or falsehood, and may therefore be made the foundation of a train of reasoning. The latter can neither be true nor false; the only character it is susceptible of is that of conformity to the ordinary usage of language.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 162

there are two distinct propositions,—the one stating that 'there may exist a figure bounded by three straight lines;' the other, that 'such a figure may be termed a triangle.' The first is a postulate, the second a definition. The first is hidden, the second evident; the first may be true or false, the second can be neither. The first is the source of all possible theorems as to triangles, the second only resumes in a word the facts contained in the other. The first is a truth, the second is a convention; the first is a part of science, the second an expedient of language. The first expresses a possible relation between three straight lines, the second gives a name to this relation. The first alone is fruitful, because it alone conforms to the nature of every fruitful proposition, and connects two facts. Let us, then, understand exactly the nature of our knowledge: it relates either to words or to things, or to both at once. If it is a matter of words, as in the definition of names, it attempts to refer words to our primitive feelings, that is to say, to the facts which form their elements. If it relates to beings, as in propositions about things, its whole effort is to link fact to fact, in order to connect the finite number of known properties with the infinite number to be known. If both are involved, as in the definitions of names which conceal a proposition relating to things, it attempts to do both. Everywhere its operation is the same. The whole matter in any case is either to understand each other,—that is, to revert to facts, or to learn,—that is, to add facts to facts.

V.

The first rampart is destroyed; our adversaries take refuge behind the second—the Theory of Proof. This theory has passed for two thousand years for an acquired, definite, unassailable truth. Many have deemed it useless, but no one has dared to call it false. On all sides it has been considered as an established theorem. Let us examine it closely and attentively. What is a proof? According to logicians, it is a syllogism. And what is a syllogism? A group of three propositions of this kind: 'All men are mortal; Prince Albert is a man; therefore Prince Albert is mortal.' Here we have the type of a proof, and every complete proof is conformable to this type. Now what is there, according to logicians, in this proof? A general proposition concerning all men, which gives rise to a particular proposition concerning a certain man. From the first we pass to the second, because the second is contained in the first; from the general to the particular, because the particular is comprised in the general. The second is but an instance of the first; its truth is contained beforehand in that of the first, and this is why it is a truth. In fact, as soon as the conclusion is no longer contained in the premises, the reasoning is false, and all the complicated rules of the Middle Ages have been reduced by the

Port-Royalists to this single rule, 'The conclusion must be contained in the premises. Thus the whole process of the human mind in its reasonings consists in recognising in individuals what is known in the class; in affirming in detail what has been established for the aggregate; in laying down a second time, and instance by instance, what has been laid down once for all at first.

By no means, replies Mill; for if it were so, our reasoning would be good for nothing. It is not a progress, but a repetition. When I have affirmed that all men are mortal, I have affirmed implicitly that Prince Albert is mortal. In speaking of the whole class, that is to say, of all the individuals of the class, I have spoken of each individual, and therefore of Prince Albert, who is one of them. I say nothing new, then, when I now mention him expressly. My conclusion teaches me nothing; it adds nothing to my positive knowledge; it only puts in another shape a knowledge which I already possessed. It is not fruitful, but purely verbal. If, then, reasoning be what logicians represent it, it is not instructive. I know as much of the subject at the beginning of my reasoning as at the end. I have transformed words into other words; I have been moving without gaining ground. Now this cannot be the case; for, in fact, reasoning does teach us new truths. I learn a new truth when I discover that Prince Albert is mortal, and I discover it by dint of reasoning; for, since he is still alive, I cannot have learnt it by direct observation. Thus logicians are mistaken; and beyond the scholastic theory of syllogism, which reduces reasoning to substitutions of words, we must look for a positive theory of proof, which shall explain how it is that, by the process of reasoning, we discover facts.

For this purpose, it is sufficient to observe, that general propositions are not the true proof of particular propositions. They seem so, but are not. It is not from the mortality of all men that I conclude Prince Albert to be mortal; the premises are elsewhere, and in the background. The general proposition is but a memento, a sort of abbreviative register, to which I have consigned the fruit of my experience. This memento may be regarded as a notebook to which we refer to refresh our memory; but it is not from the book that we draw our knowledge, but from the objects which we have seen. My memento is valuable only for the facts which it recalls. My general proposition has no value except for the particular facts which it sums up.

'The mortality of John, Thomas, and company is, after all, the whole evidence we have for the mortality of the Duke of Wellington. Not one iota is added to the proof by interpolating a general proposition. Since the individual cases are all the evidence we can possess, evidence which no logical form into which we choose to throw it can make greater than it is; and since that evidence is either sufficient in itself, or, if insufficient for the one purpose, cannot be sufficient for the other; I am unable to see why we should be forbidden to take the shortest

cut from these sufficient premises to the conclusion, and constrained to travel the "high priori road" by the arbitrary fiat of logicians.'[1]

'The true reason which makes us believe that Prince Albert will die is, that his ancestors, and our ancestors, and all the other persons who were their contemporaries, are dead. These facts are the true premises of our reasoning.' It is from them that we have drawn the general proposition; they have taught us its scope and truth; it confines itself to mentioning them in a shorter form; it receives its whole substance from them; they act by it and through it, to lead us to the conclusion to which it seems to give rise. It is only their representative, and on occasion they do without it. Children, ignorant people, animals know that the sun will rise, that water will drown them, that fire will burn them, without employing this general proposition. They reason, and we reason, too, not from the general to the particular, but from particular to particular:

'All inference is from particulars to particulars: General propositions are merely registers of such inferences already made, and short formulæ for making more: The major premiss of a syllogism, consequently, is a formula of this description: and the conclusion is not an inference drawn *from* the formula, but an inference drawn *according* to the formula: the real logical antecedent, or premisses, being the particular facts from which the general proposition was collected by induction. Those facts, and the individual instances which supplied them, may have been forgotten; but a record remains, not indeed descriptive of the facts themselves, but showing how those cases may be distinguished respecting which the facts, when known, were considered to warrant a given inference. According to the indications of this record we draw our conclusion; which is, to all intents and purposes, a conclusion from the forgotten facts. For this it is essential that we should read the record correctly: and the rules of the syllogism are a set of precautions to ensure our doing so.'[2]

'If we had sufficiently capacious memories, and a sufficient power of maintaining order among a huge mass of details, the reasoning could go on without any general propositions; they are mere formulæ for inferring particulars from particulars.'[3]

Here, as before, logicians are mistaken: they gave the highest place to verbal operations, and left the really fruitful operations in the background. They gave the preference to words over facts. They carried on the nominalism of the Middle Ages. They mistook the explanation of names for the nature of things, and the transformation of ideas for the progress of the mind. It is for us to overturn this order in logic, as we have overturned it in science, to exalt particular and instructive facts, and to give them in our theories that superiority and importance which our practice has conferred upon them for three centuries past.

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 211. [2] *Ibid.* i. 218. [3] *Ibid.* i. 240.

VI.

There remains a kind of philosophical fortress in which the Idealists have taken refuge. At the origin of all proof are Axioms, from which all proofs are derived. Two straight lines cannot enclose a space; two things, equal to a third, are equal to one another; if equals be added to equals, the wholes are equal. These are instructive propositions, for they express, not the meanings of words, but the relations of things. And, moreover, they are fertile propositions; for arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are all the result of their truth. On the other hand, they are not the work of experience, for we need not actually see with our eyes two straight lines in order to know that they cannot enclose a space; it is enough for us to refer to the inner mental conception which we have of them: the evidence of our senses is not needed for this purpose; our belief arises wholly, with its full force, from the simple comparison of our ideas. Moreover, experience follows these two lines only to a limited distance, ten, a hundred, a thousand feet; and the axiom is true for a thousand, a hundred thousand, a million miles, and for an unlimited distance. Thus, beyond the point at which experience ceases, it is no longer experience which establishes the axiom. Finally, the axiom is a necessary truth; that is to say, the contrary is inconceivable. We cannot imagine a space enclosed by two straight lines: as soon as we imagine the space enclosed, the two lines cease to be straight; and as soon as we imagine the two lines to be straight, the space ceases to be enclosed. In the assertion of axioms, the constituent ideas are irresistibly drawn together. In the negation of axioms, the constituent ideas inevitably repel each other. Now this does not happen with truths of experience: they state an accidental relation, not a necessary connection; they lay down that two facts are connected, and not that they must be connected; they show us that bodies are heavy, not that they must be heavy. Thus, axioms are not, and cannot be, the results of experience. They are not so, because we can form them mentally without the aid of experience; they cannot be so, because the nature and scope of their truths lie without the limits of experimental truths. They have another and a deeper source. They have a wider scope, and they come from elsewhere.

Not so, answers Mill. Here again you reason like a schoolman; you forget the facts concealed behind your conceptions; for examine your first argument. Doubtless you can discover, without making use of your eyes, and by purely mental contemplation, that two straight lines cannot enclose a space; but this contemplation is but a displaced experiment. Imaginary lines here replace real lines: you construct the figure in your mind instead of on paper: your imagination fulfils the office of a diagram on paper: you trust to it as you trust to the diagram, and it is as good as the other; for in regard to figures and

lines the imagination exactly reproduces the sensation. What you have seen with your eyes open, you will see again exactly the same a minute afterwards with your eyes closed; and you can study geometrical properties transferred to the field of mental vision, as accurately as if they existed in the field of actual sight. There are, therefore, experiments of the brain as there are ocular ones; and it is after just such an experiment that you deny to two straight lines, indefinitely prolonged, the property of enclosing a space. You need not for this purpose pursue them to infinity, you need only transfer yourself in imagination to the point where they converge, and there you have the impression of a bent line, that is, of one which ceases to be straight.[1] Your presence there in imagination takes the place of an actual presence; you can affirm by it what you affirmed by your actual presence, and as positively. The first is only the second in a more commodious form, with greater flexibility and scope. It is like using a telescope instead of the naked eye; the revelations of the telescope are propositions of experience; so are those of the imagination. As to the argument which distinguishes axioms from propositions of experience under the pretext that the contraries of the latter are conceivable, while the contraries of axioms are inconceivable, it is nugatory, for this distinction does not exist. Nothing prevents the contraries of certain propositions of experience from being conceivable, and the contraries of others inconceivable. That depends on the constitution of our minds. It may be that in some cases the mind may contradict its experience, and in others not. It is possible that in certain cases our conceptions may differ from our perceptions, and sometimes not. It may be that, in certain cases, external sight is opposed to internal, and in certain others not. Now, we have already seen that in the case of figures, the internal sight exactly reproduces the external. Therefore, in axioms of figures, the mental sight cannot be opposed to the actual; imagination cannot contradict sensation. In other words, the contraries of such axioms will be inconceivable. Thus axioms, although their contraries are inconceivable, are experiments of a certain class, and it is because they are so that their contraries are inconceiv-

[1] 'For though, in order actually to see that two given lines never meet, it would be necessary to follow them to infinity; yet without doing so we may know that if they ever do meet, or if, after diverging from one another, they begin again to approach, this must take place not at an infinite, but at a finite distance. Supposing, therefore, such to be the case, we can transport ourselves thither in imagination, and can frame a mental image of the appearance which one or both of the lines must present at that point, which we may rely on as being precisely similar to the reality. Now, whether we fix our contemplation upon this imaginary picture, or call to mind the generalizations we have had occasion to make from former ocular observation, we learn by the evidence of experience, that a line which, after diverging from another straight line, begins to approach to it, produces the impression on our senses which we describe by the expression "a bent line," and by the expression "a straight line."'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 337.

able. At every point there results this conclusion, which is the abstract of the system: every instructive or fruitful proposition is derived from experience, and is simply a connecting together of facts.

VII.

Hence it follows that Induction is the only key to nature. This theory is Mill's masterpiece. Only so thorough-going a partisan of experience could have constructed the theory of Induction.

What, then, is Induction?

'Induction is that operation of the mind by which we infer that what we know to be true in a particular case or cases, will be true in all cases which resemble the former in certain assignable respects. In other words, Induction is the process by which we conclude that what is true of certain individuals of a class is true of the whole class, or that what is true at certain times will be true in similar circumstances at all times.'[1]

This is the reasoning by which, having observed that Peter, John, and a greater or less number of men have died, we conclude that all men will die. In short, induction connects 'mortality' with the quality of 'man;' that is to say, connects two general facts ordinarily successive, and asserts that the first is the Cause of the second.

This amounts to saying that the course of nature is uniform. But induction does not set out from this axiom, it leads up to it; we do not find it at the beginning, but at the end, of our researches.[2] Fundamentally, experience presupposes nothing beyond itself. No *à priori* principle comes to authorise or guide her. We observe that this stone has fallen, that this hot coal has burnt us, that this man has died, and we have no other means of induction except the addition and comparison of these little isolated and transient facts. We learn by simple practical experience that the sun gives light, that bodies fall, that water quenches thirst, and we have no other means of extending or criticising these inductions than by other like inductions. Every observation and every induction draws its value from itself, and from similar ones. It is always experience which judges of experience, and induction of induction. The body of our truths has not, then, a soul distinct from it, and

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 315.

[2] 'We must first observe, that there is a principle implied in the very statement of what Induction is; an assumption with regard to the course of nature and the order of the universe: namely, that there are such things in nature as parallel cases; that what happens once, will, under a sufficient degree of similarity of circumstances, happen again, and not only again, but as often as the same circumstances recur. This, I say, is an assumption, involved in every case of induction. And, if we consult the actual course of nature, we find that the assumption is warranted. The universe, so far as known to us, is so constituted, that whatever is true in any one case, is true in all cases of a certain description; the only difficulty is, to find *what* description.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 337.

vivifying it; it subsists by the harmony of all its parts taken as a whole, and by the vitality of each part taken separately.

'Why is it that, with exactly the same amount of evidence, both negative and positive, we did not reject the assertion that there are black swans, while we should refuse credence to any testimony which asserted that there were men wearing their heads underneath their shoulders? The first assertion was more credible than the latter. But why more credible? So long as neither phenomenon had been actually witnessed, what reason was there for finding the one harder to be believed than the other? Apparently because there is less constancy in the colours of animals, than in the general structure of their internal anatomy. But how do we know this? Doubtless from experience. It appears, then, that we need experience to inform us in what degree, and in what cases, or sorts of cases, experience is to be relied on. Experience must be consulted in order to learn from it under what circumstances arguments from it will be valid. We have no ulterior test to which we subject experience in general; but we make experience its own test. Experience testifies, that among the uniformities which it exhibits, or seems to exhibit, some are more to be relied on than others; and uniformity, therefore, may be presumed, from any given number of instances, with a greater degree of assurance, in proportion as the case belongs to a class in which the uniformities have hitherto been found more uniform.'[1]

Experience is the only test, and it is all we can have.

Let us then consider how, without any help but that of experience, we can form general propositions, especially the most numerous and important of all, those which connect two successive events, by saying that the first is the cause of the second.

Cause is a great word; let us examine it. It carries in itself a whole philosophy. From the idea we have of Cause depend all our notions of nature. To give a new idea of Causation is to transform human thought; and we shall see how Mill, like Hume and Comte, but better than them, has put this idea into a new shape.

What is a cause? When Mill says that the contact of iron with moist air produces rust, or that heat dilates bodies, he does not speak of the mysterious bond by which metaphysicians connect cause and effect. He does not busy himself with the intimate force and generative virtue which certain philosophers insert between the thing producing and the product. Mill says:

'The only notion of a cause, which the theory of induction requires, is such a notion as can be gained from experience. The Law of Causation, the recognition of which is the main pillar of inductive science, is but the familiar truth, that invariability of succession is found by observation to obtain between every fact in nature and some other fact which has preceded it; independently of all consideration respecting the ulterior mode of production of phenomena, and of every other question regarding the nature of "Things in themselves."'[2]

No other foundation underlies these two expressions. We mean simply that everywhere, always, the contact of iron with the moist air will be

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 351.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 359.

followed by the appearance of rust; the application of heat by the dilatation of bodies:

'The real cause, is the whole of these antecedents.'[1]

'There is no scientific foundation for distinguishing between the cause of a phenomenon and the conditions of its happening. . . . The distinction drawn between the patient and the agent is purely verbal.'

'The cause, then, philosophically speaking, is the sum total of the conditions, positive and negative, taken together; the whole of the contingencies of every description, which being realised, the consequent invariably follows.'[2]

Much argument has been expended on the word necessary:

'If there be any meaning which confessedly belongs to the term necessity, it is *unconditionalness*. That which is necessary, that which *must* be, means that which will be, whatever supposition we may make in regard to all other things.'[3]

This is all we mean when we assert that the notion of cause includes the notion of necessity. We mean that the antecedent is sufficient and complete, that there is no need to suppose any additional antecedent, that it contains all requisite conditions, and that no other condition need exist. To follow unconditionally, then, is the whole notion of cause and effect. We have none else. Philosophers are mistaken when they discover in our will a different type of causation, and declare it an example of efficient cause in act and in exercise. We see nothing of the kind, but there, as elsewhere, we find only continuous successions. We do not see a fact engendering another fact, but a fact accompanying another. 'Our will,' says Mill, 'produces our bodily actions as cold produces ice, or as a spark produces an explosion of gunpowder.' There is here, as elsewhere, an antecedent, the resolution or state of mind, and a consequent, the effort or physical sensation. Experience connects them, and enables us to foresee that the effort will follow the resolution, as it enables us to foresee that the explosion of gunpowder will follow the contact of the spark. Let us then have done with all these psychological illusions, and seek only, under the names of cause and effect, for phenomena which form pairs without exception or condition.

Now, to establish these connections of phenomena, Mill discovers four methods, and only four,—namely, the Methods of Agreement,[4] of

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 360. [2] *Ibid.* i. 365. [3] *Ibid.* i. 372.

[4] 'If we take fifty crucibles of molten matter and let them cool, and fifty solutions and let them evaporate, all will crystallize. Sulphur, sugar, alum, salt—substances, temperatures, circumstances—all are as different as they can be. We find one, and only one, common fact—the change from the liquid to the solid state—and conclude, therefore, that this change is the invariable antecedent of crystallization. Here we have an example of the Method of Agreement. Its canon is:—

'"1. If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which all the instances agree is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon."'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 429.

Difference,[1] of Residues,[2] and of Concomitant Variations.[3] These are the only ways by which we can penetrate into nature. There are no other, and these are everywhere. And they all employ the same artifice, that is to say, *elimination;* for, in fact, induction is nothing else. You have two groups, one of antecedents, the other of consequents, each of them containing more or less elements, ten, for example. To what antecedent is each consequent joined? Is the first consequent joined to the first antecedent, or to the third, or sixth? The whole difficulty, and the only possible solution, lie there. To resolve the difficulty, and

[1] 'A bird in the air breathes; plunged into carbonic acid gas, it ceases to breathe. In other words, in the second case, suffocation ensues. In other respects the two cases are as similar as possible, since we have the same bird in both, and they take place in immediate succession. They differ only in the circumstance of immersion in carbonic acid gas being substituted for immersion in the atmosphere, and we conclude that this circumstance is invariably followed by suffocation. The Method of Difference is here employed. Its canon is:—

'"II. If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon."'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 423.

[2] ['A combination of these methods is sometimes employed, and is termed the Indirect Method of Difference, or the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference. It is, in fact, a double employment of the Method of Agreement, first applying that method to instances in which the phenomenon in question occurs, and then to instances in which it does not occur. The following is its canon:—

'"III. If two or more instances in which the phenomenon occurs have only one circumstance in common, while two or more instances in which it does not occur have nothing in common, save the absence of that circumstance; the circumstance in which alone the two sets of instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon."']—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 429.

'If we take two groups—one of antecedents and one of consequents—and can succeed in connecting by previous investigations all the antecedents but one to their respective consequents, and all the consequents but one to their respective antecedents, we conclude that the remaining antecedent is connected to the remaining consequent. For example, scientific men had calculated what ought to be the velocity of sound according to the laws of the propagation of sonorous waves, but found that a sound actually travelled quicker than their calculations had indicated. This surplus or residue of speed was a consequent for which an antecedent had to be found. Laplace discovered the antecedent in the heat developed by the condensation of each sonorous wave, and this new element, when introduced into the calculation, rendered it perfectly accurate. This is an example of the Method of Residues, the canon of which is as follows:—

'"IV. Subduct from any phenomenon such part as is known by previous inductions to be the effect of certain antecedents, and the residue of the phenomenon is the effect of the remaining antecedents."'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 431.

[3] 'Let us take two facts—as the presence of the earth and the oscillation of the pendulum, or again the presence of the moon and the flow of the tide. To connect these phenomena directly, we should have to suppress the first of them, and see

to effect the solution, we must eliminate, that is, exclude those antecedents which are not connected with the consequent we are considering.[1] But as we cannot exclude them effectually, and as in nature the pair of phenomena we are seeking is always surrounded with circumstances, we collect various cases, which by their diversity enable the mind to lop off these circumstances, and to discover the pair of phenomena distinctly. In short, we can only perform induction by discovering pairs of phenomena: we form these only by isolation; we isolate only by means of comparisons.

VIII.

These are the rules; an example will make them clearer. We will show you the methods in exercise; here is an example which combines nearly the whole of them, namely, Dr. Well's theory of dew. I will give it to you in Mill's own words, which are so clear that you must have the pleasure of pondering over them:

'We must separate dew from rain and the moisture of fogs, and limit the application of the term to what is really meant, which is, the spontaneous appearance of moisture on substances exposed in the open air when no rain or *visible* wet is falling.'[2]

What is the cause of the phenomena we have thus defined, and how was that cause discovered?

'"Now, here we have analogous phenomena in the moisture which bedews a cold metal or stone when we breathe upon it; that which appears on a glass of water fresh from the well in hot weather; that which appears on the inside of windows when sudden rain or hail chills the external air; that which runs down

if this suppression would occasion the stoppage of the second. Now, in both instances, such suppression is impossible. So we employ an indirect means of connecting the phenomena. We observe that all the variations of the one correspond to certain variations of the other; that all the oscillations of the pendulum correspond to certain different positions of the earth; that all states of the tide correspond to positions of the moon. From this we conclude that the second fact is the antecedent of the first. These are examples of the Method of Concomitant Variations. Its canon is:—

'"V. Whatever phenomenon varies in any manner whenever another phenomenon varies in some particular manner, is either a cause or an effect of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation."'—MILL's *Logic*, i. 435.

[1] 'The Method of Agreement,' says Mill (*Logic*, i. 424), 'stands on the ground that whatever can be eliminated, is not connected with the phenomenon by any law. The Method of Difference has for its foundation, that whatever can *not* be eliminated, is connected with the phenomenon by a law.' The Method of Residues is a case of the Method of Differences. The Method of Concomitant Variations is another case of the same method; with this distinction, that it is applied, not to the phenomena, but to their variations.

[2] This quotation, and all the others in this paragraph, are taken from Mill's *Logic*, i. 451–9. Mr. Mill quotes from Sir John Herschel's *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*

our walls when, after a long frost, a warm moist thaw comes on.' Comparing these cases, we find that they all contain the phenomenon which was proposed as the subject of investigation. Now "all these instances agree in one point, the coldness of the object dewed in comparison with the air in contact with it." But there still remains the most important case of all, that of nocturnal dew: does the same circumstance exist in this case? "Is it a fact that the object dewed *is* colder than the air? Certainly not, one would at first be inclined to say; for what is to *make* it so? But . . . the experiment is easy; we have only to lay a thermometer in contact with the dewed substance, and hang one at a little distance above it, out of reach of its influence. The experiment has been therefore made; the question has been asked, and the answer has been invariably in the affirmative. Whenever an object contracts dew, it *is* colder than the air."

'Here then is a complete application of the Method of Agreement, establishing the fact of an invariable connection between the deposition of dew on a surface, and the coldness of that surface compared with the external air. But which of these is cause, and which effect? or are they both effects of something else? On this subject the Method of Agreement can afford us no light: we must call in a more potent method. "We must collect more facts, or, which comes to the same thing, vary the circumstances; since every instance in which the circumstances differ is a fresh fact: and especially, we must note the contrary or negative cases, *i.e.* where no dew is produced:" for a comparison between instances of dew and instances of no dew, is the condition necessary to bring the Method of Difference into play.

'"Now, first, no dew is produced on the surface of polished metals, but it is very copiously on glass, both exposed with their faces upwards, and in some cases the under side of a horizontal plate of glass is also dewed." Here is an instance in which the effect is produced, and another instance in which it is not produced; but we cannot yet pronounce, as the canon of the Method of Difference requires, that the latter instance agrees with the former in all its circumstances except one: for the differences between glass and polished metals are manifold, and the only thing we can as yet be sure of is, that the cause of dew will be found among the circumstances by which the former substance is distinguished from the latter.'

To detect this particular circumstance of difference, we have but one practicable method, that of Concomitant Variations:

'"In the cases of polished metal and polished glass, the contrast shows evidently that the *substance* has much to do with the phenomenon; therefore let the substance *alone* be diversified as much as possible, by exposing polished surfaces of various kinds. This done, a *scale of intensity* becomes obvious. Those polished substances are found to be most strongly dewed which conduct heat worst, while those which conduct well resist dew most effectually." . . .

'The conclusion obtained is, that *cæteris paribus* the deposition of dew is in some proportion to the power which the body possesses of resisting the passage of heat; and that this, therefore (or something connected with this), must be at least one of the causes which assist in producing the deposition of dew on the surface.

'"But if we expose rough surfaces instead of polished, we sometimes find this law interfered with. Thus, roughened iron, especially if painted over or blackened, becomes dewed sooner than varnished paper: the kind of *surface*, therefore, has a great influence. Expose, then, the *same* material in very diversified states as to surface" (that is, employ the Method of Difference to ascertain concomitance of variations), "and another scale of intensity becomes at once apparent; those

surfaces which *part with their heat* most readily by radiation, are found to contract dew most copiously." . . .

'The conclusion obtained by this new application of the method is, that *æteris paribus* the deposition of dew is also in some proportion to the power of radiating heat; and that the quality of doing this abundantly (or some cause on which that quality depends) is another of the causes which promote the deposition of dew on the substance.

'"Again, the influence ascertained to exist of *substance* and *surface* leads us to consider that of *texture;* and here, again, we are presented on trial with remarkable differences, and with a third scale of intensity, pointing out substances of a close firm texture, such as stones, metals, etc., as unfavourable, but those of a loose one, as cloth, velvet, wool, eiderdown, cotton, etc., as eminently favourable to the contraction of dew." The Method of Concomitant Variations is here, for the third time, had recourse to; and, as before, from necessity, since the texture of no substance is absolutely firm or absolutely loose. Looseness of texture, therefore, or something which is the cause of that quality, is another circumstance which promotes the deposition of dew; but this third cause resolves itself into the first, viz. the quality of resisting the passage of heat: for substances of loose texture "are precisely those which are best adapted for clothing, or for impeding the free passage of heat from the skin into the air, so as to allow their outer surfaces to be very cold, while they remain warm within." . . .

'It thus appears that the instances in which much dew is deposited, which are very various, agree in this, and, so far as we are able to observe, in this only, that they either radiate heat rapidly or conduct it slowly: qualities between which there is no other circumstance of agreement than that by virtue of either, the body tends to lose heat from the surface more rapidly than it can be restored from within. The instances, on the contrary, in which no dew, or but a small quantity of it, is formed, and which are also extremely various, agree (so far as we can observe) in nothing except in *not* having this same property. . . .

'This doubt we are now able to resolve. We have found that, in every such instance, the substance must be one which, by its own properties or laws, would, if exposed in the night, become colder than the surrounding air. The coldness, therefore, being accounted for independently of the dew, while it is proved that there is a connection between the two, it must be the dew which depends on the coldness; or, in other words, the coldness is the cause of the dew.

'This law of causation, already so amply established, admits, however, of efficient additional corroboration in no less than three ways. First, by deduction from the known laws of aqueous vapour when diffused through air or any other gas; and though we have not yet come to the Deductive Method, we will not omit what is necessary to render this speculation complete. It is known by direct experiment that only a limited quantity of water can remain suspended in the state of vapour at each degree of temperature, and that this maximum grows less and less as the temperature diminishes. From this it follows deductively, that if there is already as much vapour suspended as the air will contain at its existing temperature, any lowering of that temperature will cause a portion of the vapour to be condensed, and become water. But, again, we know deductively, from the laws of heat, that the contact of the air with a body colder than itself, will necessarily lower the temperature of the stratum of air immediately applied to its surface; and will therefore cause it to part with a portion of its water, which accordingly will, by the ordinary laws of gravitation or cohesion, attach itself to the surface of the body, thereby constituting dew. This deductive proof, it will have

been seen, has the advantage of proving at once causation as well as co-existence; and it has the additional advantage that it also accounts for the *exceptions* to the occurrence of the phenomenon, the cases in which, although the body is colder than the air, yet no dew is deposited, by showing that this will necessarily be the case when the air is so under-supplied with aqueous vapour, comparatively to its temperature, that even when somewhat cooled by the contact of the colder body, it can still continue to hold in suspension all the vapour which was previously suspended in it: thus in a very dry summer there are no dews, in a very dry winter no hoar frost. . . .

'The second corroboration of the theory is by direct experiment, according to the canon of the Method of Difference. We can, by cooling the surface of any body, find in all cases some temperature (more or less inferior to that of the surrounding air, according to its hygrometric condition) at which dew will begin to be deposited. Here, too, therefore, the causation is directly proved. We can, it is true, accomplish this only on a small scale; but we have ample reason to conclude that the same operation, if conducted in Nature's great laboratory, would equally produce the effect.

'And, finally, even on that great scale we are able to verify the result. The case is one of those rare cases, as we have shown them to be, in which nature works the experiment for us in the same manner in which we ourselves perform it; introducing into the previous state of things a single and perfectly definite new circumstance, and manifesting the effect so rapidly that there is not time for any other material change in the pre-existing circumstances. "It is observed that dew is never copiously deposited in situations much screened from the open sky, and not at all in a cloudy night; but *if the clouds withdraw even for a few minutes, and leave a clear opening, a deposition of dew presently begins*, and goes on increasing. . . . Dew formed in clear intervals will often even evaporate again when the sky becomes thickly overcast." The proof, therefore, is complete, that the presence or absence of an uninterrupted communication with the sky causes the deposition or non-deposition of dew. Now, since a clear sky is nothing but the absence of clouds, and it is a known property of clouds, as of all other bodies between which and any given object nothing intervenes but an elastic fluid, that they tend to raise or keep up the superficial temperature of the object by radiating heat to it, we see at once that the disappearance of clouds will cause the surface to cool; so that Nature in this case produces a change in the antecedent by definite and known means, and the consequent follows accordingly: a natural experiment which satisfies the requisitions of the Method of Difference.'

IX.

These four are not all the scientific methods, but they lead up to the rest. They are all linked together, and no one has shown their connection better than Mill. In many cases these processes of isolation are powerless; namely, in those in which the effect, being produced by a concourse of causes, cannot be reduced into its elements. Methods of isolation are then impracticable. We cannot eliminate, and consequently we cannot perform induction. This serious difficulty presents itself in almost all cases of motion, for almost every movement is the effect of a concurrence of forces; and the respective effects of the various forces are found so mixed up in it that we cannot separate them without destroying it, so that it seems impossible to tell what part each

force has in the production of this movement. Take a body acted upon by two forces whose directions form an angle: it moves along the diagonal; each part, each moment, each position, each element of its movement, is the combined effect of the two impelling forces. The two effects are so commingled, that we cannot isolate either of them and refer it to its source. In order to perceive each effect separately, we should have to consider the movements apart, that is, to suppress the actual movement, and to replace it by others. Neither the Method of Agreement, nor of Difference, nor of Residues, nor of Concomitant Variations, which are all decomposing and eliminative, can avail against a phenomenon which by its nature excludes all elimination and decomposition. We must therefore evade the obstacle; and it is here that the last key of nature appears, the Method of Deduction. We quit the study of the actual phenomenon, we pass beside it, we observe other and simpler cases; we establish their laws, and we connect each to its cause by the ordinary methods of induction. Then, assuming the concurrence of two or of several of these causes, we conclude from their known laws what will be their total effect. We next satisfy ourselves as to whether the actual movement exactly coincides with the movement foretold; and if this is so, we attribute it to the causes from which we have deduced it. Thus, in order to discover the causes of the planetary motions, we seek by simple induction the laws of two causes: first, the force of primitive impulsion in the direction of the tangent; next, an accelerative attracting force. From these inductive laws we deduce by calculation the motion of a body submitted to their combined influence; and satisfying ourselves that the planetary motions observed coincide exactly with the predicted movements, we conclude that the two forces in question are actually the causes of the planetary motions. 'To the Deductive Method,' says Mill, 'the human mind is indebted for its most conspicuous triumphs in the investigation of nature. To it we owe all the theories by which vast and complicated phenomena are embraced under a few simple laws.' Our deviations have led us further than the direct path; we have derived efficiency from imperfection.

X.

If we now compare the two methods, their aptness, function, and provinces, we shall find, as in an abstract, the history, divisions, hopes, and limits of human science. The first appears at the beginning, the second at the end. The first necessarily gained ascendency in Bacon's time,[1] and now begins to lose it; the second necessarily lost ascendency in Bacon's time, and now begins to regain it. So that science, after having passed from the deductive to the experimental state, is now passing from the experimental to the deductive. Induction has for its province phenomena which are capable of being decomposed, and on which we can experiment. Deduction has for its province indecom-

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 526

posable phenomena, or such on which we cannot experiment. The first is efficacious in physics, chemistry, zoology, and botany, in the earlier stages of every science, and also whenever phenomena are but slightly complicated, within our reach, capable of being modified by means at our disposal. The second is efficacious in astronomy, in the higher branches of physics, in physiology, history, in the higher grades of every science, whenever phenomena are very complicated, as in animal and social life, or lie beyond our reach, as the motions of the heavenly bodies and the changes of the atmosphere. When the proper method is not employed, science is at a stand-still: when it is employed, science progresses. Here lies the whole secret of its past and its present. If the physical sciences remained stationary till the time of Bacon, it was because men used deduction when they should have used induction. If physiology and the moral sciences are now making slow progress, it is because we employ induction when deduction should be used. It is by deduction, and according to physical and chemical laws, that we shall be enabled to explain physiological phenomena. It is by deduction, and according to mental laws, that we shall be enabled to explain historical phenomena.[1] And that which has become the instrument of these two sciences, it is the object of all the others to employ. All tend to become deductive, and aim at being summed up in certain general propositions, from which the rest may be deduced. The less numerous these propositions are, the more science advances. The fewer suppositions and postulates a science requires, the more perfect it has become. Such a reduction is its final condition. Astronomy, acoustics, optics, present us models. We shall know nature when we shall have deduced her millions of facts from two or three laws. I venture to say that the theory which you have just heard is perfect. I have omitted several of its characteristics, but you have seen enough to recognise that induction has nowhere been explained in so complete and precise a manner, with such an abundance of fine and just distinctions, with such extensive and exact applications, with such a knowledge of effectual practice and acquired discoveries, with so complete an exclusion of metaphysical principles and arbitrary suppositions, and in a spirit more in conformity with the rigorous procedure of modern experimental science. You asked me just now what Englishmen have effected in philosophy; I answer, the theory of Induction. Mill is the last of that great line of philosophers, which begins at Bacon, and which, through Hobbes, Newton, Locke, Hume, Herschell, is continued down to our own times. They have carried our national spirit into philosophy; they have been positive and practical; they have not soared above facts; they have not attempted out-of-the-way paths; they have

[1] See Chapter 9, book vi. v. 2, 478, on *The Physical or Concrete Deductive Method as applied to Sociology;* and chapter 13, book iii., for explanations after Liebig, of *Decomposition, Respiration, the Action of Poisons, etc.* A whole book is devoted to the logic of the moral sciences; I know no better treatise on the subject.

cleared the human mind of its illusions, presumptions, and fancies. They have employed it in the only direction in which it can act; they only wished to mark out and lit up the already well-trodden ways of the progressive sciences. They have not been willing to spend their labour vainly in other than explored and verified paths; they have aided in the great modern work, the discovery of applicable laws; they have contributed, as men of special attainments do, to the increase of man's power. Can you find many philosophers who have done as much?

XI.

You will tell me that our philosopher has clipped his wings in order to strengthen his legs. Certainly; and he has acted wisely. Experience limits the career which it opens to us; it has given us our goal, but also our boundaries. We have only to observe the elements of which our experience is composed, and the facts from which it sets out, to understand that its range is limited. Its nature and its method confine its progress to a few steps. And, in the first place,[1] the ultimate laws of nature cannot be less numerous than the several distinct species of our sensations. We can easily reduce a movement to another movement, but not the sensation of heat to that of smell, or of colour, or of sound, nor either of these to a movement. We can easily connect together phenomena of different degrees, but not phenomena differing in species. We find distinct sensations at the bottom of all our knowledge, as simple indecomposable elements, separated absolutely one from another, absolutely incapable of being reduced one to another. Let experience do what she will, she cannot suppress these diversities which constitute her foundation. On the other hand, experience, do what she will, cannot escape from the conditions under which she acts. Whatever be her province, it is bounded by time and space; the fact which she observes, is limited and influenced by an infinite number of other facts to which she cannot attain. She is obliged to suppose or recognise some primordial condition from whence she starts, and which she does not explain.[2] Every problem has its accidental or arbitrary data: we deduce the rest from these, but there is nothing from which these can be deduced. The sun, the earth, the planets, the initial impulse of the heavenly bodies, the primitive chemical properties of substances,

[1] Mill's *Logic*, ii. 4.

[2] 'There exists in nature a number of Permanent Causes, which have subsisted ever since the human race has been in existence, and for an indefinite and probably an enormous length of time previous. The sun, the earth, and planets, with their various constituents, air, water, and the other distinguishable substances, whether simple or compound, of which nature is made up, are such permanent Causes. They have existed, and the effects or consequences which they were fitted to produce have taken place (as often as the other conditions of the production met), from the very beginning of our experience. But we can give no account of the origin of the Permanent Causes themselves.'—MILL's *Logic* i. 378

are such data.[1] If we possessed them all, we could explain everything by them, but we could not explain these themselves. Mill says:

'Why these particular natural agents existed originally and no others, or why they are commingled in such and such proportions, and distributed in such and such a manner throughout space, is a question we cannot answer. More than this, we can discover nothing regular in the distribution itself; we can reduce it to no uniformity, to no law. There are no means by which, from the distribution of these causes or agents in one part of space, we could conjecture whether a similar distribution prevails in another.'[2]

And astronomy, which, just now, afforded us the model of a perfect science, now affords us an example of a limited science. We can predict the numberless positions of all the planetary bodies; but we are obliged to assume, beside the primitive impulse and its amount, not only the force of attraction and its law, but also the masses and distances of all the bodies in question. We understand millions of facts, but it is by means of a hundred facts which we do not comprehend; we arrive at necessary results, but it is only by means of accidental antecedents; so that, if the theory of our universe were completed, there would still remain two great voids: one at the commencement of the physical world, the other at the beginning of the moral world; the one comprising the elements of being, the other embracing the elements of experience; one containing primary sensations, the other primitive agents. 'Our knowledge,' says Royer-Collard, 'consists in tracing ignorance as far back as possible.'

Can we at least affirm that these irreducible data are so only in appearance, and in comparison with our mind? Can we say that they have causes, like the derived facts of which they are the causes? Can we conclude that every event, always and everywhere, happens according to laws, and that this little world of ours, so well regulated, is a sort of epitome of the universe? Can we, by the aid of axioms, quit our narrow confines, and affirm anything of the universe? In no wise;

[1] 'The resolution of the laws of the heavenly motions established the previously unknown ultimate property of a mutual attraction between all bodies: the resolution, so far as it has yet proceeded, of the laws of crystallization, or chemical composition, electricity, magnetism, etc., points to various polarities, ultimately inherent in the particles of which bodies are composed; the comparative atomic weights of different kinds of bodies were ascertained by resolving, into more general laws, the uniformities observed in the proportions in which substances combine with one another; and so forth. Thus, although every resolution of a complex uniformity into simpler and more elementary laws has an apparent tendency to diminish the number of the ultimate properties, and really does remove many properties from the list; yet, (since the result of this simplifying process is to trace up an ever greater variety of different effects to the same agents), the further we advance in this direction, the greater number of distinct properties we are forced to recognise in one and the same object; the co-existences of which properties must accordingly be ranked among the ultimate generalities of nature.'—MILL'S *Logic*, ii. 108.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 378.

and it is here that Mill pushes his principles to its furthest consequences: for the law which attributes a cause to every event, has to him no other foundation, worth, or scope, than what it derives from experience. It has no inherent necessity; it draws its whole authority from the great number of cases in which we have recognised it to be true; it only sums up a mass of observations; it unites two data, which, considered in themselves, have no intimate connection; it joins antecedents generally to consequents generally, just as the law of gravitation joins a particular antecedent to a particular consequent; it determines a couple, as do all experimental laws, and shares in their uncertainty and in their restrictions. Listen to this bold assertion:

'I am convinced that any one accustomed to abstraction and analysis, who will fairly exert his faculties for the purpose, will, when his imagination has once learnt to entertain the notion, find no difficulty in conceiving that in some one, for instance, of the many firmaments into which sidereal astronomy now divides the universe, events may succeed one another at random, without any fixed law; nor can anything in our experience, or in our mental nature, constitute a sufficient, or indeed any, reason for believing that this is nowhere the case. The grounds, therefore, which warrant us in rejecting such a supposition with respect to any of the phenomena of which we have experience, must be sought elsewhere than in any supposed necessity of our intellectual faculties.'[1]

Practically, we may trust in so well-established a law; but

'In distant parts of the stellar regions, where the phenomena may be entirely unlike those with which we are acquainted, it would be folly to affirm confidently that this general law prevails, any more than those special ones which we have found to hold universally on our own planet. The uniformity in the succession of events, otherwise called the law of causation, must be received not as a law of the universe, but of that portion of it only which is within the range of our means of sure observation, with a reasonable degree of extension to adjacent cases. To extend it further is to make a supposition without evidence, and to which, in the absence of any ground from experience for estimating its degree of probability, it would be idle to attempt to assign any.'[2]

We are, then, irrevocably driven back from the infinite; our faculties and our assertions cannot attain to it; we remain confined in a small circle; our mind reaches not beyond its experience; we can establish no universal and necessary connection between facts; such a connection probably does not even exist. Mill stops here; but certainly, by carrying out his idea to its full extent, we should arrive at the conception of the world as a mere collection of facts; no internal necessity would induce their connection or their existence; they would be simple arbitrary, accidentally-existing facts. Sometimes, as in our system, they would be found assembled in such a manner as to give rise to regular recurrences; sometimes they would be so assembled that nothing of the sort would occur. Chance, as Democritus taught, would be at the foundation of all things. Laws would be the result of chance, and sometimes we should find them, sometimes not. It would be with

[1] Mill's *Logic*, ii. 95. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 104.

existences as with numbers—decimal fractions, for instance, which, according to the chance of their two primitive factors, sometimes recur regularly, and sometimes not. This is certainly an original and lofty conception. It is the final consequence of the primitive and dominant idea, which we have discovered at the beginning of the system, which has transformed the theories of Definition, of Propositions, and of the Syllogism; which has reduced axioms to experimental truths; which has developed and perfected the theory of induction; which has established the goal, the limits, the province, and the methods of science; which everywhere, in nature and in science, has suppressed interior connections; which has replaced the necessary by the accidental; cause by antecedent; and which consists in affirming that every assertion which is not merely verbal forms in effect a couple, that is to say, joins together two facts which were separate by their nature.

§ 2.—Abstraction.

I.

An abyss of chance and an abyss of ignorance. The prospect is gloomy: no matter, if it be true. At all events, this theory of science is a theory of English science. Rarely, I grant you, has a thinker better summed up in his teaching the practice of his country; seldom has a man better represented by his negations and his discoveries the limits and scope of his race. The operations, of which he composes science, are those in which you excel all others, and those which he excludes from science are the ones in which you are deficient more than any other nation. He has described the English mind whilst he thought to describe the human mind. That is his glory, but it is also his weakness. There is in your idea of knowledge a flaw of which the incessant repetition ends by creating the gulf of chance, from which, according to him, all things arise, and the gulf of ignorance, at whose brink, according to him, our knowledge ends. And see what comes of it. By cutting away from science the knowledge of first causes, that is, of divine things, you reduce men to become sceptical, positive, utilitarian, if they are cool-headed; or mystical, enthusiastic, methodistical, if they have lively imaginations. In this huge unknown void which you place beyond our little world, hot-headed men and uneasy consciences find room for all their dreams; and men of cold judgment, despairing of arriving at any certain knowledge, have nothing left but to sink down to the search for practical means which may serve for the amelioration of our condition. It seems to me, that these two dispositions are most frequently met with in an English mind. The religious and the positive spirit dwell there side by side, but separate. This produces an odd medley, and I confess that I prefer the way in which the Germans have reconciled science with faith.—But their philosophy is but badly written poetry.—Perhaps so.—But what they call reason, or intuition of principles, is only the

faculty of building up hypotheses.—Perhaps so.—But the systems which they have constructed have not held their ground before experience.—I do not defend what they have done.—But their absolute, their subject, their object, and the rest, are but big words.—I do not defend their style.—What, then, do you defend?—Their idea of Causation.—You believe with them that causes are discovered by a revelation of the reason!—By no means.—You believe with us that our knowledge of causes is based on simple experience?—Still less.—You think, then, that there is a faculty, other than experience and reason, capable of discovering causes?—Yes.—You think there is an intermediate course between illumination and observation, capable of arriving at principles, as it is affirmed that the first is, capable of arriving at truths, as we find that the second is?—Yes.—What is it?—Abstraction. Let us return to your original idea; I will endeavour to show in what I think it incomplete, and how you seem to me to mutilate the human mind. But you must give me space; it will be a regular argument of an advocate.

II.

Your starting-point is good: man, in fact, does not know anything of substances; he knows neither minds nor bodies; he perceives only transient, isolated, internal conditions; he makes use of these to affirm and name exterior states, positions, movements, changes, and avails himself of them for nothing else. He can only attain to facts, whether within or without, sometimes transient, when his impression is not repeated; sometimes permanent, when his impression many times repeated, makes him suppose that it will be repeated, as often as he wishes to experience it. He only grasps colours, sounds, resistances, movements, sometimes momentary and variable, sometimes like one another, and renewed. To group these facts more advantageously, he supposes, by an artifice of language, qualities and properties. We go even further than you: we think that there are neither minds nor bodies, but simply groups of present or possible movements or thoughts. We believe that there are no substances, but only systems of facts. We regard the idea of substance as a psychological illusion. We consider substance, force, and all the modern metaphysical existences, as the remains of scholastic entities. We think that there exists nothing but facts and laws, that is, events and the relations between them; and we recognise, with you, that all knowledge consists first of all in connecting or adding fact to fact. But when this is done, a new operation begins, the most fertile of all, which consists in reducing these complex into simple facts. A splendid faculty appears, the source of language, the interpreter of nature, the parent of religions and philosophies, the only genuine distinction, which, according to its degree, separates man from the brute, and great from little men. I mean Abstraction, which is the power of isolating the elements of facts, and of considering them one by one. My eyes follow the outline of a square

and abstraction isolates its two constituent properties, the equality of its sides and angles. My fingers touch the surface of a cylinder, and abstraction isolates its two generative elements, the idea of a rectangle, and of the revolution of this rectangle about one of its sides as an axis. A hundred thousand experiments develop for me, by an infinite number of details, the series of physiological operations which constitute life; and abstraction derives the law of this series, which is a round of constant loss and continual reparation. Twelve hundred pages teach me Mill's opinion on the various facts of science, and abstraction isolates his fundamental idea, namely, that the only fertile propositions are those which connect a fact to another not contained in the first. Everywhere the case is the same. A fact, or a series of facts, can always be resolved into its components. It is this resolution which forms our problem, when we ask what is the nature of an object. It is these components we look for when we wish to penetrate into the inner nature of a being. These we designate under the names of forces, causes, laws, essences, primitive properties. They are not new facts added to the first, but a portion or extract from them; they are contained in the first, they have no existence apart from the facts themselves. When we discover them, we do not pass from one fact to another, but from one to another aspect of the same fact; from the whole to a part, from the compound to the components. We only see the same thing under two forms; first, as a whole, then as divided: we only translate the same idea from one language into another, from the language of the senses into abstract language, just as we express a curve by an equation, or a cube as a function of its side. It signifies little whether this translation be difficult or not; or that we generally need the accumulation or comparison of a vast number of facts to arrive at it, and whether our mind may not often succumb before accomplishing it. However this may be, in this operation, which is evidently fertile, instead of proceeding from one fact to another, we go from the same to the same; instead of adding experiment to experiment, we set aside some portion of the first; instead of advancing, we pause to examine the ground we stand on. There are, thus, instructive judgments, which, however, are not the results of experience: there are essential propositions, which, however, are not merely verbal: there is, thus, an operation, differing from experience, which acts by cutting down instead of by addition; which, instead of acquiring, devotes itself to acquired data; and which, going farther than observation, opening a new field to the sciences, defines their nature, determines their progress, completes their resources, and marks out their end.

This is the great omission of your system. Abstraction is left in the background, barely mentioned, concealed by the other operations of the mind, treated as an appendage of Experience; we have but to re-establish it in the general theory, in order to reform the particular theories in which it is absent.

III.

To begin with Definitions. Mill teaches that there is no definition of things, and that when you define a sphere as the solid generated by the revolution of a semi-circle about its diameter, you only define a name. Doubtless you tell me by this the meaning of a name, but you also teach me a good deal more. You state that all the properties of every sphere are derived from this generating formula; you reduce an infinitely complex system of facts to two elements; you transform sensible into abstract data; you express the essence of the sphere, that is to say, the inner and primordial cause of all its properties. Such is the nature of every true definition; it is not content with explaining a name, it is not a mere description; it does not simply indicate a distinctive property; it does not limit itself to ticketing an object which will cause it to be distinguished from all others. There are, besides its definition, several other ways of causing the object to be recognised; there are other properties belonging to it exclusively: we might describe a sphere by saying that, of all bodies having an equal surface, it occupies the most space; or in many other ways. But such descriptions are not definitions; they lay down a characteristic and derived property, not a generating and primitive one; they do not reduce the thing to its factors, and reconstruct it before our eyes; they do not show its inner nature and its irreducible elements. A definition is a proposition which marks in an object that quality from which its others are derived, but which is not derived from others. Such a proposition is not verbal, for it teaches the quality of a thing. It is not the affirmation of an ordinary quality, for it reveals to us the quality which is the source of the rest. It is an assertion of an extraordinary kind, the most fertile and valuable of all, which sums up a whole science, and in which it is the aim of every science to be summed up. There is a definition in every science, and one for each object. We do not in every case possess it, but we search for it everywhere. We have arrived at defining the planetary motion by the tangential force and attraction which compose it; we can already partially define a chemical body by the notion of equivalent, and a living body by the notion of type. We are striving to transform every group of phenomena into certain laws, forces, or abstract notions. We endeavour to attain in every object to the generating elements, as we do attain them in the sphere, the cylinder, the circle, the cone, and in all mathematical loci. We reduce natural bodies to two or three kinds of movement—attraction, vibration, polarisation—as we reduce geometrical bodies to two or three kinds of elements—the point, the movement, the line; and we consider our science partial or complete, provisional or definite, according as this reduction is approximate or absolute, imperfect or complete.

IV.

The same alteration is required in the Theory of Proof. According to Mill, we do not prove that Prince Albert will die by premising that all men are mortal, for that would be asserting the same thing twice over; but from the facts that John, Peter, and others, in short, all men of whom we have ever heard, have died.—I reply that the real source of our inference lies neither in the mortality of John, Peter, and company, nor in the mortality of all men, but elsewhere. We prove a fact, says Aristotle,[1] by showing its cause. We shall therefore prove the mortality of Prince Albert by showing the cause which produces his death. And why will he die? Because the human body, being an unstable chemical compound, must in time be resolved; in other words, because mortality is added to the quality of man. Here is the cause and the proof. It is this abstract law which, present in nature, will cause the death of the prince, and which, being present to my mind, shows me that he will die. It is this abstract proposition which is demonstrative; it is neither the particular nor the general propositions. In fact, the abstract proposition proves the others. If John, Peter, and others are dead, it is because mortality is added to the quality of man. If all men are dead, or will die, it is still because mortality is added to the quality of man. Here, again, the part played by Abstraction has been overlooked. Mill has confounded it with Experience: he has not distinguished the proof from the materials of the proof, the abstract law from the finite or indefinite number of its applications. The applications contain the law and the proof, but are themselves neither law nor proof. The examples of Peter, John, and others, contain the cause, but they are not the cause. It is not sufficient to add up the cases, we must extract from them the law. It is not enough to experimentalise, we must abstract. This is the great scientific operation. Syllogism does not proceed from the particular to the particular, as Mill says, nor from the general to the particular, as the ordinary logicians teach, but from the abstract to the concrete; that is to say, from cause to effect. It is on this ground that it forms part of science, the links of which it makes and marks out; it connects principles with effects; it brings together definitions and phenomena. It diffuses through the whole range of science that Abstraction which definition has carried to its summit.

V.

Abstraction explains also axioms. According to Mill, if we know that when equal magnitudes are added to equal magnitudes the wholes are equal, or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, it is by

[1] See the Posterior Analytics, which are much superior to the Prior—*δι αἰτίων καὶ προτέρων.*

external ocular experiment, or by an internal experiment by the aid of imagination. Doubtless we may thus arrive at the conclusion that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, but we might recognise it also in another manner. We might represent a straight line in imagination, and we may also form a conception of it by reason. We may either study its form or its definition. We can observe it in itself, or in its generating elements. I can represent to myself a line ready drawn, but I can also resolve it into its elements. I can go back to its formation, and discover the abstract elements which produce it, as I have watched the formation of the cylinder and discover the revolution of the rectangle which generated it. It will not do to say that a straight line is the shortest from one point to another, for that is a derived property; but I may say that it is the line described by a point, tending to approach towards another point, and towards that point only: which amounts to saying that two points suffice to determine a straight line; in other words, that two straight lines, having two points in common, coincide in their entire length; from which we see that if two straight lines approach to enclose a space, they would form but one straight line, and enclose nothing at all. Here is a second method of arriving at a knowledge of the axiom, and it is clear that it differs much from the first. In the first we verify; in the second we deduce it. In the first we find by experience that it is true; in the second we prove it to be true. In the first we admit the truth; in the second we explain it. In the first we merely remark that the contrary of the axiom is inconceivable; in the second we discover in addition that the contrary of the axiom is contradictory. Having given the definition of the straight line, we find that the axiom that two straight lines cannot enclose a space is comprised in it, and may be derived from it, as a consequent from a principle. In fact, it is nothing more than an identical proposition, which means that the subject contains its attribute; it does not connect two separate terms, irreducible one to the other; it unites two terms, of which the second is a part of the first. It is a simple analysis, and so are all axioms. We have only to decompose them, in order to see that they do not proceed from one object to a different one, but are concerned with one object only. We have but to resolve the notions of equality, cause, substance, time, and space into their abstracts, in order to demonstrate the axioms of equality, substance, cause, time, and space. There is but one axiom, that of identity. The others are only its applications or its consequences. When this is admitted, we at once see that the range of our mind is altered. We are no longer merely capable of relative and limited knowledge, but also of absolute and infinite knowledge; we possess in axioms facts which not only accompany one another, but one of which includes the other. If, as Mill says, they merely accompanied one another, we should be obliged to conclude with him, that perhaps this might not always be the case. We should not see the inner necessity for their connection, and should only admit

is as far as our experience went; we should say that, the two facts being isolated in their nature, circumstances might arise in which they would be separate; we should affirm the truth of axioms only in reference to our world and mind. If, on the contrary, the two facts are such that the first contains the second, we should establish on this very ground the necessity of their connection; wheresoever the first may be found, it will carry the second with it, since the second is a part of it, and cannot be separated from it. No circumstance can exist between them and divide them, for they are but one thing under different aspects. Their connection is therefore absolute and universal; and we possess truths which admit neither doubt, nor limitation, nor condition, nor restriction. Abstraction restores to axioms their value, whilst it shows their origin; and we restore to science her dispossessed dominion, by restoring to the mind the faculty of which it had been deprived.

VI.

Induction remains to be considered, which seems to be the triumph of pure experience, while it is, in reality, the triumph of abstraction. When I discover by induction that cold produces dew, or that the passage from the liquid to the solid state produces crystallisation, I establish a connection between two abstract facts. Neither cold, nor dew, nor the passage from the liquid to the solid state, nor crystallisation, exist in themselves. They are parts of phenomena, extracts from complex cases, simple elements included in compound aggregates. I withdraw and isolate them; I isolate dew in general from all local, temporary, special dews which I observe; I isolate cold in general from all special, various distinct colds which may be produced by all varieties of texture, all diversities of substance, all inequalities of temperature, all complications of circumstances. I join an abstract antecedent to an abstract consequent, and I connect them, as Mill himself shows, by subtractions, suppressions, eliminations; I expel from the two groups, containing them, all the proximate circumstances; I discover the couple under the surroundings which obscure it; I detach, by a series of comparisons and experiments, all the subsidiary accidental circumstances which have clung to it, and thus I end by laying it bare. I seem to be considering twenty different cases, and in reality I only consider one; I appear to proceed by addition, and in fact I am performing subtraction. All the methods of Induction, therefore, are methods of Abstraction, and all the work of Induction is the connection of abstract facts.

VII.

We see now the two great moving powers of science, and the two great manifestations of nature. There are two operations, experience and abstraction; there are two kingdoms, that of complex facts, and that of simple elements. The first is the effect, the second the cause. The first is contained in the second, and is deduced from it, as a consequent

from its principle. Both are equivalent; they are one and the same thing considered under two aspects. This magnificent moving universe, this tumultuous chaos of mutually dependent events, this incessant life, infinitely varied and multiplied, may be all reduced to a few elements and their relations. Our whole efforts amount in passing from one to the other, from the complex to the simple, from facts to laws, from experiences to formulæ. And the reason of this is evident; for this fact which I perceive by the senses or the consciousness is but a fragment arbitrarily severed by my senses or my consciousness from the infinite and continuous woof of existence. If they were differently constituted, they would intercept other fragments; it is the chance of their structure which determines what is actually perceived. They are like open compasses, which might be more or less extended; and the area of the circle which they describe is not natural, but artificial. It is so in two ways, both externally and internally. For, when I consider an event, I isolate it artificially from its natural surroundings, and I compose it artificially of elements which do not form a natural group. When I see a falling stone, I separate the fall from the anterior circumstances which are really connected with it; and I put together the fall, the form, the structure, the colour, the sound, and twenty other circumstances which are really not connected with it. A fact, then, is an arbitrary aggregate, and at the same time an arbitrary severing;[1] that is to say, a factitious group, which separates things connected, and connects things that are separate. Thus, so long as we only regard nature by observation, we do not see it as it is: we have only a provisional and illusory idea of it. Nature is, in reality, a tapestry, of which we only see the reverse; this is why we try to turn it. We strive to discover laws; that is, the natural groups which are really distinct from their surroundings, and composed of elements really connected. We discover couples; that is to say, real compounds and real connections. We pass from the accidental to the necessary, from the relative to the absolute, from the appearance to the reality; and having found these first couples, we practise upon them the same operation as we did upon facts, for, though in a less degree, they are of the same nature. Though more abstract, they are still complex. They may be decomposed and explained. There is some ulterior reason for their existence. There is some cause or other which constructs and unites them. In their case, as well as for facts, we can search for generating elements into which they may be resolved, and from which they may be deduced. And this operation may be continued until we have arrived at elements wholly simple; that is to say, such that their decomposition would involve a contradiction. Whether we can find them or not, they exist; the axiom of causation would be falsified if

[1] An eminent student of physical science said to me: 'A fact is a superposition of laws.'

they were absent. There are, then, indecomposable elements, from which are derived more general laws; and from these, again, more special laws; and from these the facts which we observe; just as in geometry there are two or three primitive notions, from which are deduced the properties of lines, and from these the properties of surfaces, solids, and the numberless forms which nature can produce or the mind imagine. We can now comprehend the value and meaning of that axiom of causation which governs all things, and which Mill has mutilated. There is an inner constraining force which gives rise to every event, which unites every compound, which engenders every actual fact. This signifies, on the one hand, that there is a reason for everything; that every fact has its law; that every compound can be reduced to simple elements; that every product implies factors; that every quality and every being must be reducible from some superior and anterior term. And it signifies, on the other hand, that the product is equivalent to the factors, that both are but the same thing under different aspects; that the cause does not differ in nature from the effect; that the generating powers are but elementary properties; that the active force by which we represent Nature to our minds is but the logical necessity which mutually transforms the compound and the simple, the fact and the law. Thus we determine beforehand the limits of every science; and we possess the potent formula, which, establishing the invincible connection and the spontaneous production of existences, places in Nature the moving spring of Nature, whilst it drives home and fixes in the heart of every living thing the iron fangs of necessity.

VIII.

Can we arrive at a knowledge of these primary elements? For my part, I think we can; and the reason is, that, being abstractions, they are not beyond the region of facts, but are comprised in them, so that we have only to extract them from the facts. Besides, being the most abstract, that is, the most general of all things, there are no facts which do not comprise them, and from which we cannot extract them. However limited our experience may be, we can arrive at these primary notions; and it is from this observation that the modern German metaphysicians have started in attempting their vast constructions. They understood that there are simple motions, that is to say, indecomposable abstract facts, that the combinations of these engender all others, and that the laws for their mutual union or contrarieties, are the primary laws of the universe. They tried to attain to these ideas, and to evolve by pure reason the world as observation shows it to us. They have failed; and their gigantic edifice, factitious and fragile, hangs in ruins, reminding one of those temporary scaffoldings which only serve to mark out the plan of a future building. The reason is, that with a high notion of our powers, they had no exact view of their limits. For

we are outflanked on all sides by the infinity of time and space; we find ourselves thrown in the midst of this monstrous universe like a shell on the beach, or an ant at the foot of a steep slope. Here Mill is right. Chance is at the end of all our knowledge, as on the threshold of all our postulates: we vainly try to rise, and that by conjecture, to an initial state; but this state depends on the preceding one, which depends on another, and so on; and thus we are forced to accept it as a pure postulate, and to give up the hope of deducing it, though we know that it ought to be deduced. It is so in all sciences, in geology, natural history, physics, chemistry, psychology, history; and the primitive accidental fact extends its effects into all parts of the sphere in which it is comprised. If it had been otherwise, we should have neither the same planets, nor the same chemical compounds, nor the same vegetables, nor the same animals, nor the same races of men, nor, perhaps, any of these kinds of beings. If an ant were taken into another country, it would see neither the same trees, nor insects, nor dispositions of the soil, nor changes of the atmosphere, nor perhaps any of these forms of existence. There is, then, in every fact and in every object, an accidental and local part, a vast portion, which, like the rest, depends on primitive laws, but not directly, only through an infinite circuit of consequences, in such a way that between it and the primitive laws there is an infinite hiatus, which can only be bridged over by an infinite series of deductions.

Such is the inexplicable part of phenomena, and this is what the German metaphysicians tried to explain. They wished to deduce from their elementary theorems the form of the planetary system, the various laws of physics and chemistry, the main types of life, the progress of human civilisations and thought. They contorted their universal formulæ with the view of deriving from them particular cases; they took indirect and remote consequences as direct and proximate ones; they omitted or suppressed the great work which is interposed between the first laws and the final consequences; they discarded Chance from their construction, as a basis unworthy of science; and the void so left, all but filled up by deceptive materials, caused the whole edifice to fall to ruins.

Does this amount to saying, that in the facts with which this little corner of the universe furnishes us, everything is local? By no means. If an ant were capable of making experiments, it might attain to the idea of a physical law, a living form, a representative sensation, an abstract thought; for a foot of ground, on which there is a thinking brain, includes all these. Therefore, however limited be the field of the mind, it contains general facts; that is, facts spread over very vast external territories, into which its limitation prevents it from entering. If the ant were capable of reasoning, it might construct arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mechanics; for a movement of half an inch contains in abstract time, space, number, and force, all the materials of mathe-

matics: therefore, however limited the field of a mind's researches be, it includes universal data; that is, facts spread over the whole region of time and space. Again, if the ant were a philosopher, it might evolve the ideas of existence, of nothingness, and all the materials of metaphysics; for any phenomenon, interior or exterior, suffices to present these materials: therefore, however limited the field of a mind be, it contains absolute truths; that is, such that there is no object from which they could be absent. And this must necessarily be so; for the more general a fact is, the fewer objects need we examine to meet with it. If it is universal, we meet with it everywhere; if it is absolute, we cannot escape meeting it. This is why, in spite of the narrowness of our experience, metaphysics, I mean the search for first causes, is possible, but on condition that we remain at a great height, that we do not descend into details, that we consider only the most simple elements of existence, and the most general tendencies of nature. If any one were to collect the three or four great ideas in which our sciences result, and the three or four kinds of existence which make up our universe; if he were to compare those two strange quantities which we call duration and extension, those principal forms or determinations of quantity which we call physical laws, chemical types, and living species, and that marvellous representative power, the Mind, which, without falling into quantity, reproduces the other two and itself; if he discovered among these three terms—the pure quantity, the determined quantity, and the suppressed quantity[1]—such an order that the first must require the second, and the second the third; if he thus established that the pure quantity is the necessary commencement of Nature, and that Thought is the extreme term at which Nature is wholly suspended; it, again, isolating the elements of these data, he showed that they must be combined just as they are combined, and not otherwise: if he proved, moreover, that there are no other elements, and that there can be no other, he would have sketched out a system of metaphysics without encroaching on the positive sciences, and have attained the source without being obliged to descend to trace the various streams.

In my opinion, these two great operations, Experience as you have described it, and Abstraction, as I have tried to define it, comprise in themselves all the resources of the human mind, the one in its practical, the other in its speculative direction. The first leads us to consider nature as an assemblage of facts, the second as a system of laws: the exclusive employment of the first is English; that of the second, German. If there is a place between these two nations, it is ours. We have extended the English ideas in the eighteenth century; and now we can, in the nineteenth, add precision to German ideas. Our business is to restrain, to correct, to complete the two types of mind,

[1] Die aufgehobene Quantität.

one by the other, to combine them together to express their ideas in a style generally understood, and thus to produce from them the universal mind.

IX.

We went out. As it ever happens in similar circumstances, each had caused the other to reflect, and neither had convinced the other. But our reflections were short; in the presence of a lovely August morning, all arguments fall to the ground. The old walls, the rain-worn stones, smiled in the rising sun. A fresh light rested on their embrasures, on the keystones of the cloisters, on the glossy ivy leaves. Roses and honeysuckles climbed the walls, and their flowers quivered and sparkled in the light breeze. The fountains murmured in the large lonely courts. The beautiful town stood out from the morning's mist, as adorned and tranquil as a fairy palace, and its robe of soft rosy vapour was indented, as an embroidery of the Renaissance, by a border of towers, cloisters, and palaces, each enclosed in verdure and decked with flowers. The architecture of all ages had mingled their ogives, trefoils, statues, and columns; time had softened their tints; the sun united them in its light, and the old city seemed a shrine to which every age and every genius had successively added a jewel. Beyond this, the river rolled its broad sheets of silver; the mowers stood up to the knee in the high grass of the meadows. Myriads of buttercups and meadow-sweet grasses, bending under the weight of their grey heads, plants sated with the dew of the night, swarmed in the rich soil. Words cannot express this freshness of tints, and their luxuriance of vegetation. The more the long line of shade receded, the more brilliant and full of life the flowers appeared. On seeing them, virgin and timid in their gilded veil, I thought of the blushing cheeks and modest eyes of a young girl who puts on for the first time her necklace of jewels. Around, as though to guard them, enormous trees, four centuries old, extended in regular lines; and I found in them a new trace of that practical good sense which has effected revolutions without committing ravages; which, while reforming in all directions, has destroyed nothing; which has preserved both its trees and its constitution, which has lopped off the dead branches without levelling the trunk; which alone, in our days, among all nations, is in the enjoyment not only of the present, but of the past.

CHAPTER VI

Poetry.—Tennyson.

I. Talent and work—First attempts—Wherein he was opposed to preceding poets—Wherein he carried on their spirit.

II. First period—Female characters—Delicacy and refinement of sentiment and style—Variety of his emotions and of his subjects—Literary curiosity and poetic dilettantism—*The Dying Swan*—*The Lotos-Eaters.*

III. Second period—Popularity, good fortune, and life—Permanent sensibility and virgin freshness of the poetic temperament—Wherein he is at one with nature—*Locksley Hall*—Change of subject and style—Violent outbreak and personal feeling—*Maud.*

IV. Return of Tennyson to his first style—*In Memoriam*—Elegance, coldness, and lengthiness of this poem—The subject and the talent must harmonise—What subjects agree with the dilettante artist—*The Princess*—Comparison with *As You Like It*—Fanciful and picturesque world—How Tennyson repeats the dreams and the style of the Renaissance.

V. How Tennyson repeats the freshness and simplicity of the old epic—*The Idylls of the King*—Why he has restored the epic of the Round Table—Purity and elevation of his models and his poetry—*Elaine*—*Morte d'Arthur*—Want of individual and absorbing passion—Flexibility and disinterestedness of his mind—Talent for metamorphosis, embellishment, and refinement.

VI. His public—Society in England—Country comfort—Elegance—Education—Habits—Wherein Tennyson suits such a society—Society in France—Parisian life—Pleasures—Representation—Conversation—Boldness of mind—Wherein Alfred de Musset suits such a society—Comparison of the two societies and of the two poets.

I.

WHEN Tennyson published his first poems, the critics found fault with them. He held his peace; for ten years no one saw his name in a review, nor even in a publisher's catalogue. But when he appeared again before the public, his books had made their way alone and under the surface, and he passed at once for the greatest poet of his country and his time.

Men were surprised, and with a pleasing surprise. The potent generation of poets who had just died out, had passed like a whirlwind. Like their forerunners of the sixteenth century, they had carried away

and hurried everything to its extremes. Some had culled the gigantic legends, piled up dreams, ransacked the East, Greece, Arabia, the Middle Ages, and overloaded the human imagination with tones and fancies from every clime. Others had buried themselves in metaphysics and morality, had mused indefatigably on the human condition, and spent their lives in the sublime and the monotonous. Others, making a medley of crime and heroism, had conducted, through darkness and flashes of lightning, a train of contorted and terrible figures, desperate with remorse, relieved by their grandeur. Men wanted to rest after so many efforts and so much excess. Quitting the imaginative sentimental and Satanic school, Tennyson appeared exquisite. All the forms and ideas which had pleased them were found in him, but purified, modulated, set in a splendid style. He completed an age; he enjoyed that which had agitated others; his poetry was like the lovely evenings in summer: the outlines of the landscape are then the same as in the day-time; but the splendour of the dazzling dome is dulled; the re-invigorated flowers lift themselves up, and the calm sun, on the horizon, harmoniously blends in a network of crimson rays the woods and meadows which it just before burned by its brightness.

II.

What first attracted people were Tennyson's portraits of women. Adeline, Eleanore, Lilian, the May Queen, were keepsake characters, from the hand of a lover and an artist. The keepsake is gilt-edged, embossed with flowers and decorations, richly got up, soft, full of delicate figures, always elegant and always correct, which we might take to be sketched at random, and which are yet drawn carefully, on white vellum, slightly touched by their outline, all selected to rest and occupy the tender, white hands of a young bride or a girl. I have translated many ideas and many styles, but I shall not attempt to translate one of these portraits. Each word of them is like a tint, curiously deepened or shaded by the neighbouring tint, with all the boldness and success of the happiest refinement. The least alteration would obscure all. And there could not be too much of an art so just, so consummate, in painting the charming prettinesses, the sudden hauteurs, the half blushes, the imperceptible and fleeting caprices of feminine beauty He opposes, harmonises them, makes them, as it were, into a gallery. Here is the frolicsome child, the little flirting fairy, who claps her tiny hands, who,

> 'So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
> From beneath her gather'd wimple
> Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
> Till the lightning laughters dimple
> The baby-roses in her cheeks;
> Then away she flies.'[1]

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Lilian*, 5.

Then the thoughtful fair, who thinks, with staring large blue eyes:

'Whence that aery bloom of thine,
Like a lily which the sun
Looks thro' in his sad decline,
And a rose-bush leans upon,
Thou that faintly smilest still,
As a Naiad in a well,
Looking at the set of day.'[1]

Anew 'the ever varying Madeline,' now smiling, then frowning, then joyful again, then angry, then uncertain between the two:

'Frowns perfect-sweet along the brow
Light-glooming over eyes divine,
Like little clouds sun-fringed.'[2]

The poet returned well pleased to all things, refined and exquisite. He caressed them so carefully, that his verses appeared at times far-fetched, affected, almost euphuistic. He gave them too much adornment and polishing; he seemed like an epicurean in style, as well as in beauty. He looked for pretty rustic scenes, touching remembrances, curious or pure sentiments. He made them into elegies, pastorals, and idyls. He wrote in every accent, and delighted in entering into the feelings of all ages. He wrote of St. Agnes, St. Simeon Stylites, Ulysses, Œnone, Sir Galahad, Lady Clare, Fatima, the Sleeping Beauty. He imitated alternately Homer and Chaucer, Theocritus and Spenser, the old English poets and the old Arabian poets. He gave life successively to the little real events of English life, and the great fantastic adventures of extinguished chivalry. He was like those musicians who use their bow in the service of all masters. He strayed through nature and history, with no preoccupation, without fierce passion, bent on feeling, relishing, culling from all parts, in the flower-stand of the drawing-room and in the rustic hedgerows, the rare or wild flowers whose scent or beauty could charm or amuse him. Men entered into his pleasure; smelt the graceful bouquets which he knew so well how to put together; preferred those which he took from the country; found that his talent was nowhere more easy. They admired the minute observation and refined sentiment which knew how to grasp and interpret the fleeting aspects. In the *Dying Swan* they forgot that the subject was almost threadbare, and the interest somewhat slight, that they might appreciate such verses as this:

'Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
Above in the wind was the swallow,

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Adeline*, 33. [2] *Ibid. Madeline* 15.

Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.'[1]

But these melancholy pictures did not display him entirely; men accompanied him to the land of the sun, toward the soft voluptuousness of southern seas; they returned, with an involuntary fascination, to the verses in which he depicts the companions of Ulysses, who, slumbering in the land of the Lotos-eaters, happy dreamers like himself, forgot their country, and renounced action:

'A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse. . . .

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petal from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep. . . .

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil. . . .

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly),

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *The Dying Swan*, 45.

With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy.
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.'[1]

III.

Was this charming dreamer simply a dilettante? Men liked to consider him so; he seemed too happy to admit violent passions. Fame came to him easily and quickly, at the age of thirty. The Queen had justified the public favour by creating him Poet Laureate. A great writer had declared him a more genuine poet than Lord Byron, and maintained that nothing so perfect had been seen since Shakspeare. The student, at Oxford, put Tennyson's works between an annotated Euripides and a manual of scholastic philosophy. Young ladies found him amongst their marriage presents. He was called rich, venerated by his family, admired by his friends, amiable, without affectation, even unsophisticated. He lived in the country, chiefly in the Isle of Wight, amongst books and flowers, free from the annoyances, rivalries, and burdens of society, and his life was easily imagined to be a beautiful dream, as sweet as those which he had pictured.

Yet the men who looked closer saw that there was a fire of passion under this smooth surface. A genuine poetic temperament never fails him. He feels too acutely to be at peace. When we quiver at the least touch, we shake and tremble under great shocks. Already here and there, in his pictures of country and love, a brilliant verse broke with its glowing colour through the calm and correct outline. He had felt that strange growth of unknown powers which suddenly arrest a man with fixed gaze before revealed beauty. The specialty of the poet is to be ever young, for ever virgin. For us, the vulgar, things are threadbare; sixty centuries of civilisation have worn out their primitive freshness; we perceive them only through a veil of ready-made phrases; we employ them, we no longer comprehend them; we see in them no more magnificent flowers, but good vegetables; the luxuriant primeval forest is to us nothing but a well-planned, over-known, kitchen garden. On the other hand, the poet, in presence of this world, is as the first man on the first day. In a moment our phrases, our reasonings, all the trappings of memory and prejudice, vanish from his mind; things seem new to him; he is astonished and ravished; a headlong stream of sensations oppresses him; it is the all-potent

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *The Lotos-Eaters*, 140.

sap of human invention, which, checked in us, begins to flow in him. Fools call him mad, the truth being that he is a seer: for we may indeed be sluggish, but nature is always full of life; the rising sun is as beautiful as on the first dawn; the streaming floods, the multiplying flowers, the trembling passions, the forces which hurl onward the stormy whirlwind of existence, aspire and strive with the same energy as at their birth; the immortal heart of nature beats yet, heaving its coarse trappings, and its beatings work in the poet's heart when they no longer echo in our own. Tennyson felt this, not indeed always; but twice or thrice at least he has dared to make it heard. We have found the free action of full emotion, and recognised the voice of a man in these verses of *Locksley Hall:*

'Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong;"
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought:
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!'[1]

This is very frank and strong. *Maud* appeared still more so. In it the rapture broke forth with all its inequalities, familiarities, freedom, violence. The correct, measured poet gave himself up, seemed to think and weep aloud. This book is the secret diary of a gloomy young man, soured by great family misfortunes, by long solitary meditations, who gradually became enamoured, dared to speak, found himself loved. He does not sing, but speaks; they are the hazarded, reckless words of ordinary conversation; details of everyday life; the description of a toilet, a political dinner, a service and sermon in a village church. The prose of Dickens and Thackeray did not more firmly grasp real and actual manners. And by its side, most splendid poetry abounded and blossomed, as in fact it blossoms and abounds in the midst of our commonplaces. The smile of a richly dressed girl, a sunbeam on a stormy sea, or on a spray of roses, throws these sudden illuminations into impassioned souls. What verses are these, in which he represents himself in his dark little garden:

'A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot I be
Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
Half lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land?'[2]

What a holiday in his heart when he is loved! What madness in these cries, that intoxication, that tenderness which would pour itself on all, and summon all to the spectacle and the participation of his happiness! How all is transfigured in his eyes; and how constantly he is himself transfigured! Gaiety, then ecstasy, then childish fun, then satire, then outpourings, all ready movements, all sudden changes, like a crackling and flaming fire, renewing every moment its shape and colour: how rich is the soul, and how it can live a hundred years in a day! Surprised and insulted by the brother, he kills him in a duel, and loses her whom he loved. He flees; he is seen wandering in London. What a gloomy contrast is that of the great busy careless town, and a solitary man haunted by true grief! We follow him down the noisy streets, through the yellow fog, under the wan sun which rises above the river like a 'dull red ball,' and we hear the heart full of anguish, deep sobs, insensate agitation of a soul which would but cannot tear itself from its memories. Despair grows, and in the end the reverie becomes a vision:

'Dead, long dead,
Long dead!

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Locksley Hall*, 266.
[2] *Maud*, 1856, iv. 1, p. 15

And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter.[1] . . .
O me! why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half-dead;
Then I cannot be wholly dumb;
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper.'[2]

However, he revives, and gradually rises again. War breaks out, a liberal and generous war, the war against Russia; and the big, manly heart is healed by action and courage of the deep wound of love:

'And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath
With a loyal people shouting a battle-cry. . . .
Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar;
And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.'[3]

This explosion of feeling was the only one; Tennyson has not again encountered it. In spite of the moral close, men said that he was imitating Byron; they cried out against these bitter declamations; they thought that they perceived the rebellious accent of the Satanic school; they blamed this uneven, obscure, excessive style; they were shocked at these crudities and incongruities; they called on the poet to return to his first well-proportioned style. He was discouraged, left the storm-clouds, and returned to the azure sky. He was right; he is there better than anywhere else. A fine soul may be transported, attain at times to the fire of the most violent and the strongest beings: personal memories, they say, had furnished the matter of *Maud* and of *Locksley Hall;* with a woman's delicacy, he had the nerves of a woman. The

[1] Tennyson's *Maud*, 1856, xxvii. 1, p. 99.
[2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 11, p. 105.
[3] *Ibid.* xxviii. 3 and 4, p. 108.

fit over, he fell again into his 'golden languors,' into his calm reverie. After *Locksley Hall* he had written the *Princess;* after *Maud* he wrote the *Idylls of the King.*

IV.

The great task of an artist is to find subjects which suit his talent. Tennyson has not always succeeded in this. His long poem, *In Memoriam*, written in praise and memory of a friend who died young, is cold, monotonous, and often too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning; but, like a correct gentleman, with bran new gloves, wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief, and displays throughout the religious service, which ends the ceremony, all the compunction of a respectful and well-trained layman. He was to find his subjects elsewhere. To be poetically happy is the object of a dilettante-artist. For this many things are necessary. First of all, that the place, the events, and the characters shall not exist. Realities are coarse, and always, in some sense, ugly; at least they are heavy: we do not treat them at our pleasure, they oppress the fancy; at bottom there is nothing truly sweet and beautiful in our life but our dreams. We are ill at ease whilst we remain glued to earth, hobbling along on our two feet, which drag us wretchedly here and there in the place which impounds us. We need to live in another world, to hover in the wide-air kingdom, to build palaces in the clouds, to see them rise and crumble, to follow in a hazy distance the whims of their moving architecture, and the turns of their golden volutes. In this fantastic world, again, all must be pleasant and beautiful, the heart and senses must enjoy it, objects must be smiling or picturesque, sentiments delicate or lofty; no crudity, incongruity, brutality, savageness must come to sully with its excess the modulated harmony of this ideal perfection. This leads the poet to the legends of chivalry. Here is the fantastic world, splendid to the sight, noble and specially pure, in which love, war, adventures, generosity, courtesy, all spectacles and all virtues which suit the instincts of our European races, are assembled, to furnish them with the epic which they love, and the model which suits them.

The *Princess* is a fairy tale as sentimental as those of Shakspeare. Tennyson here thought and felt like a young knight of the Renaissance. The mark of this kind of mind is a superabundance, as it were, a superfluity of sap. In the characters of the *Princess*, as in those of *As You Like It*, there is an over-fulness of fancy and emotions. They have recourse, to express their thought, to all ages and lands; they carry speech to the most reckless rashness; they clothe and burden every idea with a sparkling image, which drags and glitters upon it like a brocade clustered with jewels. Their nature is over-rich; at every shock there is in them a sort of rustle of joy, anger, desire; they live more than we, more warmly and more quickly. They are excessive, refined, ready to weep, laugh, adore, jest, inclined to mingle

adoration and jests, urged by a nervous rapture to contrasts, and even extremes. They sally in the poetic field with impetuous and changing caprice and joy. To satisfy the subtlety and superabundance of their originality, they need fairy-tales and masquerades. In fact, the *Princess* is both. The beautiful Ida, daughter of King Gama, who is monarch of the South (this country is not to be found on the map), was affianced in her childhood to a beautiful prince of the North. When the time appointed has arrived, she is claimed. She, proud and bred on learned arguments, has become irritated against the rule of men, and in order to liberate women has founded a university on the frontiers, which is to raise her sex, and to be the colony of future equality. The prince sets out with Cyril and Florian, two friends, obtains permission from good King Gama, and, disguised as a girl, enters the maiden precincts, where no man may enter in on pain of death. There is a charming and rallying grace in this picture of a university for girls. The poet sports with beauty; no badinage could be more romantic or tender. We smile to hear long learned words come from these rosy lips:

> 'There sat along the forms, like morning doves
> That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,
> A patient range of pupils.'[1]

They listen to the historic dissertations and promises of the social revolution, in 'Academic silks, in hue the lilac, with a silken hood to each, and zoned with gold, . . . as rich as moth from dusk cocoons.' Amongst these girls was Melissa, a child —

> 'A rosy blonde, and in a college gown
> That clad her like an April daffodilly
> (Her mother's colour) with her lips apart,
> And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,
> As bottom agates seem to wave and float
> In crystal currents of clear morning seas.'[2]

Be sure that the place assists in the magic. That plain title of College and Faculty recalls in Frenchmen only scant and dirty buildings, which we might mistake for barracks or furnished lodgings. Here, as in an English university, flowers creep up the porches, vines cling round the bases of the monuments, roses strew the alleys with their petals; the laurel thickets grow around the gates, the courts pile up their marble architecture, bossed with sculptured friezes, varied with urns from which droops the green pendage of the plants. 'The Muses and the Graces, group'd in threes, enring'd a billowing fountain in the midst.' After the lecture, some girls, in the deep meadow grass, 'smoothed a petted peacock down;' others,

> 'Leaning there on those balusters, high
> Above the empurpled champaign, drank the gale
> That blown about the foliage underneath,

[1] *The Princess* a Medley, 12th ed. 1864, ii. 34. [2] *Ibid.* ii 46

And sated with the innumerable rose
Beat balm upon our eyelids.'[1]

At every gesture, every attitude, we recognise young English girls; it is their brightness, their freshness, their innocence. And here and there, too, we perceive the deep expression of their large dreamy eyes:

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more. . . .

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'[2]

This is an exquisite and strange voluptuousness, a reverie full of delight, and full, too, of anguish, the shudder of delicate and melancholy passion which we have already found in *Winter's Tale* or in *Twelfth Night*.

The three friends have gone forth with the princess and her train, all on horseback, and pause 'near a coppice-feather'd chasm,'

'till the Sun
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.'

Cyril, heated by wine, begins to troll a careless tavern-catch, and betrays the secret. Ida, indignant, turns to leave; her foot slips, and she falls into the river; the prince saves her, and wishes to flee. But he is seized by the Proctors and brought before the throne, where the haughty maiden stands ready to pronounce sentence. At this moment

'. . . There rose
A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together: from the illumined hall
Long lanes of splendour slanted o'er a press
Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded ewes,
And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike eyes,
And gold and golden heads; they to and fro
Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, some pale,
All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the land,
And some that men were in the very walls,
And some they cared not; till a clamour grew
As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded: high above them stood
The placid marble Muses, looking peace.'[3]

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, 12th ed. 1864, iii. 80.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 76. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 99.

The father of the prince has come with his army to deliver him, and has seized King Gama as a hostage. The princess is obliged to release the young man; she comes to him with distended nostrils, waving hair, a tempest raging in her heart, and thanks him with bitter irony. She trembles with wounded pride; she stammers, hesitates; she tries to constrain herself in order the better to insult him, and suddenly breaks out:

> ' "You have done well and like a gentleman,
> And like a prince: you have our thanks for all:
> And you look well too in your woman's dress:
> Well have you done and like a gentleman.
> You have saved our life: we owe you bitter thanks:
> Better have died and spilt our bones in the flood—
> Then men had said—but now—What hinders me
> To take such bloody vengeance on you both?—
> Yet since our father—Wasps in our good hive,
> You would-be quenchers of the light to be,
> Barbarians, grosser than your native bears—
> O would I had his sceptre for one hour!
> You that have dared to break our bound, and gull'd
> Our servants, wrong'd and lied and thwarted us—
> *I* wed with thee! *I* bound by precontract
> Your bride, your bondslave! not tho' all the gold
> That veins the world were pack'd to make your crown,
> And every spoken tongue should lord you. Sir,
> Your falsehood and yourself are hateful to us:
> I trample on your offers and on you:
> Begone: we will not look upon you more.
> Here, push them out at gates."' [1]

How is this fierce heart to be softened, fevered with feminine anger, embittered by disappointment and insult, excited by long dreams of power and ascendency, and rendered more savage by its virginity! But how anger becomes her, and how lovely she is! And how this fire of sentiment, this lofty declaration of independence, this chimerical ambition for reforming the future, reveal the generosity and pride of a young heart, enamoured of the beautiful! It is agreed that the quarrel shall be settled by a combat of fifty men against fifty other men. The prince is conquered, and Ida sees him bleeding on the sand. Slowly, gradually, in spite of herself, she yields, receives the wounded in her palace, and comes to the bedside of the dying prince. Before his weakness and his wild delirium pity expands, then tenderness, then love:

> ' From all a closer interest flourish'd up
> Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
> Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
> By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
> And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
> But such as gather'd colour day by day.' [2]

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, iv. 102.

[2] *Ibid.* v. 163

One evening he returns to consciousness, exhausted, his eyes still troubled by gloomy visions; he sees Ida before him, hovering like a dream, painfully opens his pale lips, and 'utter'd whisperingly:'

> '"If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream,
> I would but ask you to fulfil yourself:
> But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
> I ask you nothing: only, if a dream,
> Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.
> Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die."
> . . . She turned; she paused;
> She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a cry;
> Leapt fiery Passion from the brink of death;
> And I believe that in the living world
> My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
> Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose
> Glowing all over noble shame; and all
> Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
> And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
> Than in her mould that other, when she came
> From barren deeps to conquer all with love;
> And down the streaming crystal dropt; and she
> Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
> Naked, a double light in air and wave.'[1]

This is the accent of the Renaissance, as it left the heart of Spenser and Shakspeare; they had this voluptuous adoration of form and soul, and this divine sentiment of beauty.

V.

There is another chivalry, which inaugurates the Middle Age, as this closes it; sung by children, as this by youths; and restored in the *Idylls of the King*, as this in the *Princess*. It is the legend of Arthur, Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table. With admirable art, Tennyson has renewed the feelings and the language; this pliant soul takes all tones, in order to give itself all pleasures. This time he has become epic, antique, and ingenuous, like Homer, and like the old *trouvères* of the *chansons de Geste*. It is pleasant to quit our learned civilisation, to rise again to the primitive age and manners, to listen to the peaceful discourse which flows copiously and slowly, as a river on a smooth slope. The mark of the ancient epic is clearness and calm. The ideas were new-born; man was happy and in his infancy. He had not had time to refine, to cut down and adorn his thoughts; he showed them bare. He was not yet pricked by manifold lusts; he thought at leisure. Every idea interested him; he unfolded it curiously, and explained it. His speech never jerks; he goes step by step, from one object to another, and every object seems lovely to him; he pauses,

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, v. 165.

observes, and takes pleasure in observing. This simplicity and peace are strange and charming; we abandon ourselves, it is well with us; we do not desire to go more quickly; we fancy we would gladly remain thus, and for ever. For primitive thought is wholesome thought; we have but marred it by grafting and cultivation; we return to it as our familiar element, to find contentment and repose.

But of all epics, this of the Round Table is distinguished by purity Arthur, the irreproachable king, has assembled

> 'A glorious company, the flower of men,
> To serve as model for the mighty world,
> And be the fair beginning of a time.
> I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
> To reverence the King, as if he were
> Their conscience, and their conscience as their King, . . .
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds.'[1]

There is a sort of refined pleasure in having to do with such a world; for there is none in which purer or more touching fruits could grow. I will show one—'Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat'—who, having seen Lancelot once, loves him when he has departed, and for her whole life. She keeps the shield, which he has left, in a tower, and every day goes up to contemplate it, counting 'every dint a sword had beaten in it, and every scratch a lance had made upon it,' and living on her dreams. He is wounded: she goes to tend and heal him:

> 'She murmur'd, "vain, in vain: it cannot be.
> He will not love me: how then? must I die?"
> Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
> That has but one plain passage of few notes,
> Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
> For all an April morning, till the ear
> Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
> Went half the night repeating, "must I die?"'[2]

At last she confesses her secret; but with what modesty and spirit! He cannot marry her; he is tied to another. She droops and fades; her father and brothers try to console her, but she will not be consoled. She is told that Lancelot has sinned with the queen; she does not believe it:

> 'At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yester night
> I seem'd a curious little maid again,
> As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
> And when you used to take me with the flood
> Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
> Only you would not pass beyond the cape

[1] *Idylls of the King*, 1864; *Guinevere* 249. [2] *Ibid.*; *Elaine*, 195.

That has the poplar on it ; there you fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because you would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the king.
. . . Now shall I have my will."'[1]

She dies, and her father and brothers did what she had asked :

'But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her :
" Sister, farewell for ever," and again
" Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead
Steer'd by the dumb went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.'[2]

Thus they arrive at Court in great silence, and King Arthur read the letter before all his knights and weeping ladies :

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan.
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'[3]

Nothing more : she ends with this word, full of so sad a regret and so

[1] *Idylls of the King ; Elaine*, 201. [2] *Ibid.* 206. [3] *Ibid.* 213.

tender an admiration: we could hardly find anything more simple or more delicate.

It seems as if an archæologist might reproduce all styles except the grand, and Tennyson has reproduced all, even the grand. It is the night of the final battle; all day the tumult of the mighty fray 'roll'd among the mountains by the winter sea;' Arthur's knights had fallen man by man;' he himself had fallen, 'deeply smitten through the helm,' and Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights, bore him to a place hard by,

> 'A chapel nigh the field,
> A broken chancel with a broken cross,
> That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
> On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
> Lay a great water, and the moon was full.'[1]

Arthur, feeling himself about to die, bids him take his sword Excalibur 'and fling him far into the middle meer;' for he had received it from the sea-nymphs, and after him no mortal must handle it. Twice Sir Bedivere went to obey the king: twice he paused, and came back pretending that he had flung away the sword; for his eyes were dazzled by the wondrous diamond setting which clustered and shone about the haft. The third time he throws it:

> 'The great brand
> Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
> And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
> Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
> Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
> By night, with noises of the northern sea.
> So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
> But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
> And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
> Three times, and drew him under in the meer.'[2]

Then Arthur, rising painfully, and scarce able to breathe, bids Sir Bedivere take him on his shoulders and 'bear me to the margin.' 'Quick, quick! I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' They arrive thus, through 'icy caves and barren chasms,' to the shores of a lake, where they saw 'the long glories of the winter moon:'

> 'They saw then how there hove a dusky barge
> Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
> Beneath them; and descending they were ware
> That all the decks were dense with stately forms
> Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
> Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
> A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
> And, as it were one voice, an agony
> Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Morte d'Arthur*, 189. [2] *Ibid.* 194

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur: "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud. . . .'[1]

Before the barge drifts away, King Arthur, raising his slow voice, consoles Sir Bedivere, standing in sorrow on the shore, and pronounces this heroic and solemn farewell:

'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. . . .
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. . . .
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst,—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'[2]

Nothing, I think, calmer and more imposing has been seen since Goethe.

How, in a few words, shall we assemble all the features of so manifold a talent? Tennyson is a born poet, that is, a builder of airy palaces and imaginary castles. But the individual passion and absorbing preoccupations which generally guide the hands of such men are wanting to him; he found in himself no plan of a new edifice; he has built after all the rest; he has simply chosen amongst all forms the most elegant, ornate, exquisite. Of their beauties he has taken but the flower. At most, now and then, he has here and there amused himself by designing some genuinely English and modern cottage. If in this choice of architecture, adopted or restored, we look for a trace of him, we shall find it, here and there, in some more finely sculptured frieze, in some more delicate and graceful sculptured rose-work; but we shall only find it marked and sensible in the purity and elevation of the moral emotion which we shall carry away with us when we quit his gallery of art.

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Morte d'Arthur*, 196. [2] *Ibid.* 197

VI.

The favourite poet of a nation, it seems, is he whose works a man, setting out on a journey, prefers to put into his pocket. Now-a-days it would be Tennyson in England, and Alfred de Musset in France. The two publics differ: so do their modes of life, their reading, and their pleasures. Let us try to describe them; we shall better understand the flowers if we see them in the garden.

Here we are at Newhaven or at Dover, and we glide over the rails looking on either side. On both sides fly past country-houses; they exist everywhere in England, on the margin of lakes, on the edge of the bays, on the summit of the hill, in every picturesque point of view. They are the chosen abodes; London is but a business-place; men of the world live, amuse themselves, visit each other, in the country. How well ordered and pretty is this house! If near it there was some old edifice, abbey, or castle, it has been preserved. The new building has been suited to the old; even if detached and modern, it does not lack style; gable-ends, mullions, broad-windows, turrets perched at every corner, have a Gothic air in their newness. Even this cottage, modest as it is, suited to people, with a very good income, is pleasant to see with its pointed roofs, its porch, its bright brown bricks, all covered with ivy. Doubtless grandeur is generally wanting; in these days the men who mould opinion are no longer great lords, but rich gentlemen, well brought up, and landholders; it is pleasantness which appeals to them. But how they understand the word! All round the house is a lawn fresh and smooth as velvet, rolled every morning. In front, great rhododendrons form a bright thicket in which murmur swarms of bees; festoons of exotics creep and curve over the short grass; honeysuckles clamber up the trees; hundreds of roses, drooping over the windows, shed their rain of petals on the paths. Fine elms, yew-trees, great oaks, jealously tended, everywhere combine their leafage or rear their heads. Trees have been brought from Australia and China to adorn the thickets with the elegance or the singularity of their foreign shapes; the copper-beech stretches over the delicate verdure the shadow of its dark metallic-hued foliage. How delicious is the freshness of this verdure! How it glistens, and how it abounds in wild flowers brightened by the sun! What care, what cleanliness, how everything is arranged, kept up, refined, for the comfort of the senses and the pleasure of the eyes! If there is a slope, streams have been devised with little islets in the glen, peopled with tufts of roses; ducks of select breed swim in the pools, where the water-lilies display their satin stars. Fat oxen lie in the grass, sheep as white as if fresh from the washing, all kinds of happy and model animals, fit to delight the eyes of an amateur and a master. We return to the house, and before entering I look upon the view; decidedly the love of Englishmen for the country is innate; how comfortable it will be from that parlour

window to look upon the setting sun, and the broad network of sunlight spread across the woods! And how cunningly they have disposed the house, so that the landscape may be seen at distance between the hills, and at hand between the trees! We enter. How nicely everything is got up, and how commodious! The least wants have been foreseen, provided for; there is nothing which is not correct and perfect; we imagine that all the objects have received a prize, or at least honourable mention, at some industrial exhibition. And the attendance of the servants is as good as the objects; cleanliness is not more scrupulous in Holland; Englishmen have, in proportion, three times as many servants as Frenchmen; not too many for the minute details of the service. The domestic machine acts without interruption, without shock, without hindrance; every wheel has its movement and its place, and the comfort which it dispenses falls on the mouth like honeydew, as true and as exquisite as the sugar of a model refinery when quite purified.

We converse with our host. We very soon find that his mind and soul have always been well balanced. When he left college he found his career shaped out for him; no need for him to revolt against the Church, which is half rational; nor against the Constitution, which is nobly liberal: the faith and law presented to him are good, useful, moral, liberal enough to maintain and employ all diversities of sincere minds. He became attached to them, he loves them, he has received from them the whole system of his practical and speculative ideas; he does not waver, he no longer doubts, he knows what he ought to believe and to do. He is not carried away by theories, dulled by sloth, checked by contradictions. Elsewhere youth is like a stagnant or scattering water; here there is a fine old channel which receives and directs to a useful and sure end the stream of its activities and passions. He acts, works, rules. He is married, has tenants, is a magistrate, becomes a politician. He improves and rules his parish, his estate, and his family. He founds societies, speaks at meetings, superintends schools, dispenses justice, introduces improvements; he employs his reading, his travels, his connections, his fortune, and his rank, to lead his neighbours and dependants amicably to some work which profits themselves and the public. He is influential and respected. He has the pleasures of self-esteem and the satisfaction of conscience. He knows that he has authority, and that he uses it loyally, for the good of others. And this healthy state of mind is supported by a wholesome life. His mind is beyond doubt cultivated and occupied; he is well-informed, knows several languages, has travelled, is fond of all precise information; he is kept by his newspaper conversant with all new ideas and discoveries. But, at the same time, he loves and practises all bodily exercises. He rides, takes long walks, hunts, yachts, follows closely and by himself all the details of breeding and agriculture; he lives in the open air, he withstands the encroachments of a sedentary life, which always elsewhere leads the modern man to agitation of the brain, weakness

of the muscles, and excitement of the nerves. Such is this elegant and common-sense society, refined in comfort, regular in conduct, whose dilettante tastes and moral principles confine it within a sort of flowery border, and prevent it from having its attention diverted.

Does any poet suit such a society better than Tennyson? Without being a pedant, he is moral; he may be read in the family circle by night; he does not rebel against society and life; he speaks of God and the soul, nobly, tenderly, without ecclesiastical prejudice; there is no need to reproach him like Lord Byron; he has no violent and abrupt words, excessive and scandalous sentiments; he will pervert nobody. We shall not be troubled when we close the book; we may listen when we quit him, without contrast, to the grave voice of the master of the house, who repeats the evening prayers before the kneeling servants. And yet, when we quit him, we keep a smile of pleasure on our lips. The traveller, the lover of archæology, has been pleased by the imitations of foreign and antique sentiments. The sportsman, the lover of the country, has relished the little country scenes and the rich rural pictures. The ladies have been charmed by his portraits of women; they are so exquisite and pure! He has laid such delicate blushes on those lovely cheeks! He has depicted so well the changing expression of those proud or candid eyes! They like him because they feel that he likes them. More, he honours them, and rises in his nobility to the height of their purity. Young girls weep in listening to him; certainly when, a while ago, we heard the legend of *Elaine* or *Enid* read, we saw the fair heads drooping under the flowers which adorned them, and white shoulders heaving with furtive emotion. And how delicate was this emotion! He has not rudely trenched upon truth and passion. He has risen to the height of noble and tender sentiments. He has gleaned from all nature and all history what was most lofty and amiable. He has chosen his ideas, chiselled his words, equalled by his artifices, successes, and diversity of his style, the pleasantness and perfection of social elegance in the midst of which we read him. His poetry is like one of those gilt and painted stands in which flowers of the country and exotics mingle in artful harmony their stalks and foliage, their clusters and cups, their scents and hues. It seems made expressly for these wealthy, cultivated, free business men, heirs of the ancient nobility, new leaders of a new England. It is part of their luxury as of their morality; it is an eloquent confirmation of their principles, and a precious article of their drawing-room furniture.

We return to Calais, and travel towards Paris, without pausing on the road. There are on the way plenty of noblemen's castles, and houses of rich men of business. But we do not find amongst them, as in England, the thinking elegant world, which, by the refinement of its tastes and the superiority of its mind, becomes the guide of the nation and the arbiter of the beautiful. There are two peoples in France: the

provinces and Paris; the one dining, sleeping, yawning, listening; the other thinking, daring, watching, and speaking: the first drawn by the second, as a snail by a butterfly, alternately amused and disturbed by the whims and the audacity of its guide. It is this guide we must look upon! Let us enter Paris! What a strange spectacle! It is evening, the streets are aflame, a luminous dust covers the busy noisy crowd, which jostles, elbows, crushes, and swarms in front of the theatres, behind the windows of the cafés. Have you remarked how all these faces are wrinkled, frowning, or pale; how anxious are their looks, how nervous their gestures? A violent brightness falls on these shining heads; most are bald before thirty. To find pleasure here, they must have plenty of excitement: the dust of the boulevard settles on the ice which they are eating; the smell of the gas and the steam of the pavement, the perspiration left on the walls dried up by the fever of a Parisian day, 'the human air full of impure rattle'—this is what they cheerfully breathe. They are crammed round their little marble tables, persecuted by the glaring light, the shouts of the waiters, the jumble of mixed talk, the monotonous motion of gloomy walkers, the flutter of loitering courtesans moving anxiously in the shadow. Doubtless their homes are unpleasing, or they would not change them for these bagmen's delights. We climb four flights, and find ourselves in a polished, gilded room, adorned with stuccoed ornaments, plaster statuettes, new furniture of old oak, with every kind of pretty knick-knack on the mantlepieces and the whatnots. 'It makes a good show;' you can give a good reception to envious friends and people of standing. It is an advertisement, nothing more; we pass half an hour there agreeably, and that is all. You will never make more than a house of call out of it; it is low in the ceiling, close, inconvenient, rented by the year, dirty in six months, serving to display a fictitious luxury. All the enjoyments of these people are factitious, and, as it were, snatched hurriedly; they have in them something unhealthy and irritating. They are like the cookery of their restaurants, the splendour of their cafés, the gaiety of their theatres. They want them too quick, too lively, too manifold. They have not cultivated them patiently, and culled them moderately; they have forced them on an artificial and heating soil, they grasp them in haste. They are refined and greedy; they need every day a stock of coloured words, broad anecdotes, biting railleries, new truths, varied ideas. They soon get bored, and cannot endure tedium. They amuse themselves with all their might, and find that they are hardly amused. They exaggerate their work and their expense, their wants and their efforts. The accumulation of sensations and fatigue stretches their nervous machine to excess, and their polish of social gaiety chips off twenty times a day, displaying a basis of suffering and ardour.

But how fine they are, and how free is their mind! How this incessant rubbing has sharpened them! How ready they are to grasp

and comprehend everything! How apt this studied and manifold culture has made them to feel and relish tendernesses and sadnesses, unknown to their fathers, deep feelings, strange and sublime, which hitherto seemed foreign to their race! This great city is cosmopolitan; here all ideas may be born; no barrier checks the mind; the vast field of thought opens before them without a beaten or prescribed track. Use neither hinders nor guides them; an official Government and Church rid them of the care of leading the nation: the two powers are submitted to, as we submit to the beadle or the policeman, patiently and with chaff; they are looked upon as a play. In short, the world here seems but a melodrama, a subject of criticism and argument. And be sure that criticism and argument have full scope. An Englishman entering on life, finds to all great questions an answer ready made. A Frenchman entering on life finds to all great questions simply suggested doubts. In this conflict of opinions he must create a faith for himself, and, being mostly unable to do it, he remains open to every uncertainty, and therefore to every curiosity and to every pain. In this gulf, which is like a vast sea, dreams, theories, fancies, intemperate, poetic and sickly desires, collect and chase each other like clouds. If in this tumult of moving forms we seek some solid work to prepare a foundation for future opinions, we find only the slowly-rising edifices of the sciences, which here and there obscurely, like submarine polypes, construct of imperceptible coral the basis on which the belief of the human race is to rest.

Such is the world for which Alfred de Musset wrote: in Paris he must be read. Read? We all know him by heart. He is dead, and it seems as if we daily hear him speak. A conversation among artists, as they jest in a studio, a beautiful young girl leaning over her box at the theatre, a street washed by the rain, making the black pavement shine, a fresh smiling morning in the woods of Fontainebleau, everything brings him before us, as if he were alive again. Was there ever a more vibrating and genuine accent? This man, at least, has never lied. He has only said what he felt, and he has said it, as he felt it. He thought aloud. He made the confession of every man. He was not admired, but loved; he was more than a poet, he was a man. Every one found in him his own feelings, the most transient, the most familiar; he did not restrain himself, he gave himself to all; he had the last virtues which remain to us, generosity and sincerity. And he had the most precious gift which can seduce an old civilisation, youth. As he said, 'that hot youth, a tree with a rough bark, which covers all with its shadow, prospect and path.' With what fire did he hurl onward love, jealousy, the thirst of pleasure, all the impetuous passions which rise with virgin blood from the depths of a young heart, and how did he make them clash together! Has any one felt them more deeply? He was too full of them, he gave himself up to them, was intoxicated with them. He rushed through life, like an eager racehorse in the

country, whom the scent of plants and the splendid noveltv of the vast heavens urge, breast foremost, in its mad career, which shatters all before him, and himself as well. He desired too much; he wished strongly and greedily to taste life in one draught, thoroughly; he did not glean or taste it; he tore it off like a bunch of grapes, pressed it, crushed it, twisted it; and he remains with stained hands, as thirsty as before.[1] Then broke forth sobs which found an echo in all hearts. What! so young, and already so wearied! So many precious gifts, so fine a mind, so delicate a tact, so rich and mobile a fancy, so precocious a glory, such a sudden blossom of beauty and genius, and yet anguish, disgust, tears, and cries! What a mixture! With the same attitude he adores and curses. Eternal illusion, invincible experience, keep side by side in him to fight and tear him. He became old, and remained young; he is a poet, and he is a sceptic. The Muse and her peaceful beauty, Nature and her immortal freshness, Love and his happy smile, all the swarm of divine visions barely passed before his eyes, when we see approaching, with curses and sarcasms, all the spectres of debauchery and death. He is as a man in a festive scene, who drinks from a carven cup, standing up, in front, amidst applause and triumphal music, his eyes laughing, his heart full of joy, heated and excited by the generous wine descending in his breast, whom suddenly we see growing pale; there was poison in the cup; he falls, and the death-rattle is in his throat; his convulsed feet beat upon the silken carpet, and all the terrified guests look on. This is what we felt on the day when the most beloved, the most brilliant amongst us, suddenly quivered from an unseen attack, and was struck down, with the death-rattle in his throat, amid the lying splendours and gaieties of our banquet.

Well! such as he was, we love him for ever: we cannot listen to another; beside him, all seem cold or false. We leave at midnight the theatre in which he had heard Malibran, and we enter the gloomy *rue des Moulins*, where, on a hired bed, his Rolla[2] came to sleep and die. The lamps cast flickering rays on the slippery pavement. Restless shadows march past the doors, and trail along their dress of draggled silk to meet the passers-by. The windows are fastened; here and there a light pierces through a half-closed shutter, and shows a dead dahlia on the edge of a window-sill. To-morrow an organ will grind before these panes, and the wan clouds will leave their droppings on these dirty walls. From this wretched place came the most impassioned of his poems! These vilenesses and vulgarities of the stews and the lodging-house caused this divine eloquence to flow! it was

[1] 'O médiocrité! celui qui pour tout bien
T'apporte à ce tripot dégoûtant de la vie
Est bien poltron au jeu s'il ne dit: Tout ou rien.'

[2] See vol. i. p. 237, n. 1.

these which at such a moment gathered in this bruised heart all the splendours of nature and history, to make them spring up in sparkling jets, and shine under the most glowing poetic sun that ever rose! We feel pity; we think of that other poet, away there in the Isle of Wight, who amuses himself by dressing up lost epics. How happy he is amongst his fine books, his friends, his honeysuckles and roses! No matter. De Musset, in this very spot, in this filth and misery, rose higher. From the heights of his doubt and despair, he saw the infinite, as we see the sea from a storm-beaten promontory. Religions, their glory and their decay, the human race, its pangs and its destiny, all that is sublime in the world, appeared there to him in a flash of lightning. He felt, at least this once in his life, the inner tempest of deep sensations, giant-dreams, and intense voluptuousness, whose desire enabled him to live, and whose lack forced him to die. He was no mere dilettante; he was not content to taste and enjoy; he left his mark on human thought; he told the world what was man, love, truth, happiness. He suffered, but he invented; he fainted, but he produced. He tore from his entrails with despair the idea which he had conceived, and showed it to the eyes of all, bloody but alive. That is harder and lovelier than to go fondling and gazing upon the ideas of others. There is in the world but one work worthy of a man, the production of a truth, to which we devote ourselves, and in which we believe. The people who have listened to Tennyson are better than our aristocracy of townsfolk and bohemians; but I prefer Alfred de Musset to Tennyson.

INDEX.

ABELARD, i. 133, 135.
Addison, Joseph, ii. 39, 60, 67, 76; his life and writings, 89-115, 256, 265, 396, 406, 412 *seq.*, 433.
Adhelm, i. 50, 54, 156.
Agriculture, improvement in, in sixteenth century, i. 146; in the nineteenth, ii. 224, 326 *seq.*
Akenside, Mark, ii. 220.
Alcuin, i. 50, 55.
Alexander VI., Pope, i. 354.
Alexandrian philosophy, i. 16.
Alfred the Great, i. 50, 54.
Alison, Sir Archibald, ii. 224.
Amory, Thomas, ii. 180.
Angelo, Michael, i. 155, 306; ii. 213.
Anglo-Saxon poetry, i. 41 *seq.*
Ann of Cleves, i. 157.
Anselm, i. 61.
Anthology, the, i. 176, 202.
Arbuthnot, Dr. John, ii. 133.
Architecture, Norman, i. 60, 61, 107; the Tudor style, 147.
Ariosto, i. 156, 187; ii. 14.
Aristocracy, British, in the nineteenth century, ii. 328 *seq.*
Arkwright, Sir Richard, ii. 84.
Armada, the, i. 146, 235.
Arnold, Dr. Thomas, ii. 270, 334.
Arthur and Merlin, romance of, i. 62.
Ascham, Roger, i. 153, 207, 353.
Athelstan, i. 28, 42.
Augier, Emile, ii. 355.
Austen, Jane, ii. 258.

BACON, Francis, Lord, i. 207, 215-221, 378, 382; ii. 403 *seq.*, 416.
Bacon, Roger, i. 135.
Bain, Alexander, ii. 337.
Bakewell, Robert, ii. 84.
Bale, John, i. 156.
Balzac, Honoré de, i. 3; ii. 361, 392.
Barclay, Alexander, i. 138.
Barclay, John, ii. 60.
Barclay, Robert, i. 398.
Barrow, Isaac, ii. 60, 63 *seq.*
Baxter, Richard, i. 225, 396; ii. 60.
Bayly's (Lewis) Practice of Piety, i. 401.
Beattie, James, ii. 182, 220.
Beauclerk, Henry, i. 61.
Beaumont, Francis, i. 245, 258-263, 384, 387, 433.
Becket, Thomas à, i. 80.
Beckford, W., ii. 251.
Bede, the Venerable, i. 50.
Bedford, Duke of (John Russell), ii. 75.
Beethoven, Lewis van, ii. 259.
Behn, Mrs. Aphra, i. 479; ii. 29.
Bell, Currer. *See* Brontë, Charlotte.
Bénoît de Sainte-Maure, i. 61.
Bentham, Jeremy, ii. 84, 406.
Bentley, Richard, ii. 69, 70.
Beowulf, an Anglo-Saxon epic poem, i. 38-41.
Béranger, i. 359; ii 418.
Berkeley, Bishop, ii. 69.
Berkley, Sir Charles, i. 466.
Berners, Lord, i. 157.
Best, Paul, i. 391.
Bible, English. *See* Wiclif, Tyndale.
Blackmore, Sir Richard, ii. 4.
Blount, Edward, i. 162.
Boccaccio, i. 106, 110; ii. 39.
Bodley, Sir Thomas, i. 208.
Boethius, i. 50-53.
Boileau, i. 469, 501; ii. 3, 36, 54, 196, 202, 466.
Boleyn, Ann, i. 232.
Bolingbroke, Lord (Henry St John), ii. 46 *seq.*, 69, 197, 396.
Bonner, Edmund, i. 377.
Borde, Andrew, i. 156.
Borgia, Cæsar, i. 354, 355.
Borgia, Lucretia, i. 154, 354.
Bossu (or Lebossu), ii. 3, 106, 110.
Bossuet, i. 14; ii. 11, 211, 433.
Boswell, James, ii. 185 *seq.*
Bourchier. *See* Berners.
Boyle, the Hon. Robert, ii. 69.
Bridaine, Father, ii. 65.
Britons, ancient, i. 29.
Brontë, Charlotte (Currer Bell), ii. 258, 270, 337.
Browne, Sir Thomas, i. 207, 208, 213-215, 378, 382.
Browning, Mrs., ii. 270, 337.

Brunanburh, Athelstan's victory at, celebrated in Saxon song, i. 42.
Buckingham, Duke of (John Sheffield), i. 476, 498, 501.
Buckle, Henry Thomas, ii. 316 *seq.*, 333.
Bulwer, Sir Henry Lytton, ii. 258, 337.
Bunyan, John, i. 398-408, 460.
Burke, Edmund, ii. 69, 81-88, 185, 417, 433.
Burleigh, Lord (William Cecil), i. 230; ii. 419.
Burnet, Bishop, ii. 60.
Burney, Francisca (Madame D'Arblay), ii. 53, 84, 185, 409.
Burns, Robert, ii. 27; sketch of his life and works, 228-241.
Burton, Robert, i. 148, 209-212, 378, 433.
Busby, Dr. Richard, ii. 31.
Bute, Lord, ii. 46 *seq.*, 75.
Butler, Bishop, ii. 84.
Butler, Samuel, i. 463-466; ii. 70.
Byng, Admiral, ii. 75.
Byron, Lord, ii. 200, 242; his life and works, 271-312.

Cædmon, hymns of, i. 45, 48; his metrical paraphrase of parts of the Bible, 48-50, 156.
Calamy, Edmund, i. 398.
Calderon, i. 135, 234, 478.
Calvin, John, i. 359, 388; ii. 68.
Camden, William, i. 207.
Campbell, Thomas, ii. 250, 280.
Carew, Thomas, i. 201.
Carlyle, Thomas, i. 5; ii. 270, 333; style and mind, 437 *seq.*; vocation, 452 *seq.*; philosophy, morality, and criticism, 458 *seq.*; conception of history, 467.
Carteret, John (Earl Granville), ii. 76.
Castlereagh, Lord, i. 268.
Catherine, St., play of, i. 61.
Cellini, Benvenuto, i. 20, 95, 155.
Cervantes, i. 83, 126, 187; ii. 158.
Chalmers, George, i. 56.
Chandos, Duke of (John Brydges), ii. 197.
Chapman, George, i. 269.
Charles of Orleans, i. 69, 132.
Charles I. of England, ii. 409.
Charles II. and his court, i. 466 *seq.*
Chateaubriand, i. 4; ii. 105.
Chatham. *See* Pitt.
Chaucer, i. 86, 87, 105, 132; ii. 39.
Chesterfield, Lord, ii. 49 *seq.*, 185, 203.
Chevy Chase, ballad of, i. 104.
Chillingworth, William, i. 207, 379, 381; ii. 67.
Christianity, introduction of, into Britain, i. 44, 50.
Chroniclers, French, i. 68.
Chronicles, Saxon, i. 53.
Cibber, Colley, ii. 198, 205.
Cimbrians, the, i. 31.
Clarendon, Lord Chancellor (Edward Hyde), i. 207, 466.
Clarke, Dr. John, ii. 58, 68.
Classic spirit in Europe, its origin and nature, i. 490-492.
Classical authors translated, i. 152, 160.
Clive, Lord, ii. 406.
Coleridge, Hartley, ii. 235.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, ii. 248.
Collier, Jeremy, ii. 4, 31.
Collins, William, ii. 221.
Colman, George, i. 530.
Comedy-writers, English, i. 504 *seq.*
Comines, Philippe de, i. 104.
Commerce in sixteenth century, i. 145; ii. 324 *seq.*
Comte, Auguste, ii. 480.
Condillac, Stephen-Bonnot de, ii. 456, 480.
Congreve, William, i. 504-522; ii. 53.
Conybeare, J. J., i. 42 *seq.*
Corbet, Bishop, i. 379.
Corneille, i. 10; ii. 3, 13.
Cotton, Sir Robert, i. 207, 208.
Court pageantries in the sixteenth century, i. 148, 149.
Coventry, Sir John, i. 467.
Coverdale, Miles, i. 367.
Cowley, Abraham, i. 204-206, 378, 409.
Cowper, William, ii. 243-247.
Crabbe, George, ii. 246, 280.
Cranmer, Archbishop, i. 362, 369.
Crashaw, Richard, i. 378.
Criticism and History, ii. 402 *seq.*
Cromwell, Oliver, i. 5, 379, 391; ii. 410, 445, 470.
Crowne, John, i. 479.
Curll, Edmund, ii. 205.

Daniel, Samuel, i. 207.
Dante, i. 113, 132, 135, 442; ii. 457.
Darwin, Charles, i. 10.
Davie, Adam, i. 77.
Davies, Sir John, i. 378.
Day, John, i. 389.
Decker, Thomas, i. 236.
De Foe, ii. 73, 151-158, 328.
Delille, James, ii. 208.
Denham, Sir John, i. 501-504.
Denmark, i. 24.
Dennis, John, ii. 93.
Descartes, i. 473; ii. 11, 456.

Dickens, Charles, ii. 258, 270; his novels, 339-366.
Domesday Book, i. 55, 63, 86.
Donne, John, i. 203, 204, 379.
Dorat, C. J., ii. 204, 303.
Dorset, Earl of (Charles Sackville), i. 497, 498.
Drake, Admiral, i. 146.
Drake, Dr. Nathan, i. 146, 228.
Drama, formation of the, i. 245 *seq*
Drayton, Michael, i. 173, 179, 378.
Drummond, William, i. 433.
Dryden, John, i. 14, 433; his comedies, 476-479, 501; his life and writings, ii. 1-44, 94, 195, 453.
Dudevant, Madame (George Sand), ii. 355.
Dunstan, St., i. 28 *seq.*
Durer, Albert, i. 357, 358.
Dyer, Sir Edward, i. 171.

Earle, John, i. 208.
Eddas, the Scandinavian, i. 32-36; ii. 289.
Edgeworth, Maria, ii. 391.
Edward VI., i. 373.
Edwy and Elgiva, story of, i. 29, 30.
Eliot, George. *See* Evans, Mary A.
England, climate of, i. 25.
English Constitution, formation of the, i. 87.
Elizabeth, Queen, i. 148-150, 207, 228.
Elwin, Whitwell, ii. 195 *seq.*
Erigena, John Scotus, i. 50, 54.
Esménard, Joseph Alphonse, i. 137.
Essex, Robert, Earl of, i. 228, 230.
Etheredge, Sir George, i. 479.
Evans, Mary A. (George Eliot), ii. 258, 335, 337.
Eyck, Van, i. 126.

Falkland, Lord, i. 207.
Farnese, Pietro Luigi, i. 354.
Farquhar, George, i. 504-522.
Faust, ii. 227.
Feltham, Owen, i. 208.
Fenn, Sir John, i. 145.
Ferguson, Dr. Adam, ii. 71, 406.
Fermor, Mrs. Arabella, ii. 203, 204.
Feudalism, the protection and character of, i. 58, 59.
Fichte, ii. 457.
Fielding, Henry, i. 268, 462; ii. 170-176, 190.
Filmore, Sir Robert, ii. 72.
Finsborough, Battle of, an Anglo-Saxon poem, i. 42.
Fisher, John, Bishop of Rochester, i. 232, 371.
Flemish artists, i. 144, 150.
Fletcher, Giles, i. 378.
Fletcher, John, i. 245, 258-266, 384, 387, 433.
Ford, John, i. 245, 250 *seq.*, 262, 263; ii. 24.
Fortescue, Sir John, i. 94 *seq.*
Fox, Charles James, ii. 48, 76, 80 *seq.*
Fox, George, i. 393, 398, 460.
Fox, John, i. 361 *seq.*
Francis of Assisi, i. 135.
Freeman, Edward A., i. 59.
Frisians, the, i. 24, 25.
Froissart, i. 68, 85, 106, 107, 110.
Froude, J. A., i. 86, 362 *seq.*
Fuller, Thomas, i. 268.

Gaimar, Geoffroy, i. 61, 75.
Gainsborough, Thomas, landscape painter, i. 530.
Garrick, David, ii. 185, 188.
Gaskell, Mrs. Elizabeth C., ii. 258, 337.
Gay, John, i. 523; ii. 50, 194, 215-217.
Geoffrey of Monmouth, i. 112.
German ideas, introduction of, in Europe and England, ii. 452 *seq.*
Germany, drinking habits in, i. 356.
Gibbon, Edward, ii. 185.
Gladstone, William Ewart, ii. 408.
Glencoe, massacre of, ii. 430 *seq.*
Glover, Richard, ii. 221.
Godwin, William, ii. 265.
Goethe, i. 5, 14, 442, 448; ii. 174, 227, 249, 291-296, 452 *seq.*
Go' smith, Oliver, i. 523; ii. 73, 182-185.
Goltzius, i. 165.
Gower, John, i. 73, 136.
Grammont, Count de, i. 462, 489, 490.
Gray, Thomas, ii. 220.
Greene, Robert, i. 173, 176, 177, 236, 237, 305.
Grenville, George, ii. 75.
Gresset, J. B. Lewis, ii. 204.
Grey, Lady Jane, i. 152, 228.
Grostête, Robert, i. 73, 77.
Grote, George, ii. 337.
Guicciardini, Ludovic, i. 146.
Guido, i. 13.
Guizot, i. 89; ii. 409, 414, 433.
Guy of Warwick, i. 62.

Habington, William, i. 203.
Hackluyt, Richard, i. 207.
Hale, Sir Matthew, i. 363.
Hales, John, i. 207, 379, 381; ii. 68.
Halifax, Charles Montague, Earl of, ii. 91, 95, 117, 121.
Hall, Bishop Joseph, i. 208, 379.
Hallam, Henry, i. 98; ii. 410.
Hamilton, Anthony, i. 462 *seq.*

Hamilton, Sir William, ii. 337.
Hampden, John, ii. 409.
Hampole, i. 77.
Hardyng, John, i. 227.
Harrington, Sir John, i. 200.
Harrison, William, i. 146 *seq.*
Hastings, Warren, ii. 81, 406, 417 *seq.*, 421.
Hawes, Stephen, i. 138.
Hegel, i. 14, 17, 133; ii. 406, 455 *seq.*
Heine, i. 2, 24, 302; ii. 222, 227, 249, 259.
Hemling, Hans, i. 143.
Henry Beauclerk, i. 61.
Henry of Huntingdon, i. 30, 61.
Henry VIII. and his Court, i. 227, 362.
Herbert, George, i. 203.
Herbert, Lord, i. 207.
Herder, John Godfrey von, i. 5.
Herrick, Robert, i. 201, 202.
Hertford, Earl of, i. 227.
Hervey, Lord, ii. 212.
Heywood, Mrs. Eliza, ii. 206.
Heywood, John, i. 156, 235.
Hill, Aaron, ii. 197.
History, philosophy of. *See the* Introduction, *passim.*
Hobbes, Thomas, i. 472-475; ii. 26.
Hogarth, William, ii. 190-192, 206.
Holinshed's Chronicles, i. 148, 207, 231.
Holland, i. 23 *seq.*
Homer and Spenser, i. 183.
Hooker, Richard, i. 207, 379 *seq.*
Horn, King, romance of, i. 62, 83.
Hoveden, John, i. 73.
Howard, John, ii. 84.
Howard, Sir Robert, ii. 17.
Howe, John, ii. 427.
Hugo, Victor, i. 2, 139; ii. 42, 248, 259.
Hume, David, ii. 70, 182, 424, 471.
Hunter, William, martyrdom of, i. 376, 377.
Hutcheson, Francis, ii. 71, 84, 406.

Iceland and its legends, i. 27, 32.
Independency in the sixteenth century, i. 391 *seq.*, 425.
Industry, British, in the nineteenth century, ii. 324 *seq.*
Irish, the ancient, i. 29.
Italian writings and ideas, taste for, in sixteenth century, i. 153; vices of the Italian Renaissance, 352-356.

James I. and his Court, i. 200 *seq.*
James II., ii. 415.
Jewell, Bishop, i. 233.
Johnson, Samuel, i. 268; ii. 69, 84, 185-192, 199, 222, 466.
Joinville, Sire de, i. 68.
Jones, Inigo, i. 147, 270.
Jones, Sir William, ii. 185.
Jonson, Ben, i. 175, 223, 235, 433, ii. 316; sketch of his life, i. 267-270; his learning, style, etc., 270-274; his dramas, 275-279; his comedies, 279-288; compared with Molière, 288; fanciful comedies and smaller poems, 289-293.
Jordaens, Jacob, i. 150.
Jowett, Benjamin, ii. 270, 457.
Judith, poem of, i. 47, 48.
Junius, Francis, i. 49.
Junius, Letters of, ii. 76 *seq.*, 275.
Jutes, the, and their country, 24 *seq.*

Keats, John, ii. 295.
Kemble, John M., i. 28, 38 *seq.*
Knighton, Henry, i. 102.
Knolles, Richard, i. 207.
Knox, John, i. 356, 373; ii. 472.
Kyd, Thomas, i. 236.

Lackland, John, i. 84.
La Harpe, ii. 466.
Lamartine, i. 2; ii. 249, 259.
Lamb, Charles, ii. 248, 250.
Languet, Hubert, i. 164.
Latimer, Bishop, i. 90, 364, 372 *seq.*
Lanfranc, first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, i. 61.
Langtoft, Peter, i. 73.
Laud, Archbishop, i. 382; ii. 418.
Lavergne, Léonce de, i. 25.
Law, William, ii. 70.
Layamon, i. 76.
Lebrun, Ponce Denis Ecouchard, i. 137.
Lee, Nathaniel, ii. 18.
Leibnitz, ii. 210.
Leighton, Dr. Alexander, i. 391, 424.
Lely, Sir Peter, ii. 83.
Leo X., Pope, i. 353.
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, i. 4.
Lingard, Dr. John, i. 26, 27.
Locke, John, i. 409; ii. 67, 70 *seq.*, 84, 416.
Lockhart, John Gibson, ii. 252 *seq.*
Lodge, Thomas, i. 172, 235.
Lombard, Peter, i. 132, 134.
Loménie de Brienne, Cardinal, ii. 439.
London in Henry VIII.'s time, i. 146; in the present day, ii. 324 *seq.*
Longchamps, William, i. 80.
Longus, Greek romance-writer, i. 176.
Lorris, Guillaume de, i. 69, 79.
Loyola, i. 135, 144; ii. 407.
Ludlow, Edmund, i. 392.
Lulli, a renowned Italian composer, ii. 11.

Lully, Raymond, i. 135.
Luther, Martin, i. 20, 144, 352-355.
Lydgate, John, 137, 138.
Lyly, John, i. 162.
Lyly, William, i. 152

Macaulay, Thomas Babington (Lord), ii. 270; his works, 402-434.
Machiavelli, i. 154.
Mackenzie, Henry, ii. 219, 230.
Mackintosh, Sir James, ii. 410.
Macpherson, James, ii. 220.
Malcolm, Sir John, ii. 251.
Malherbe, Francis de, ii. 453.
Malte-Brun, Conrad, i. 24.
Mandeville, Bernard, ii. 69.
Manners of the people in the sixteenth century, i. 150 *seq.*
Marguerite of Navarre, i. 110.
Marlborough, Duchess of, ii. 212.
Marlborough, Duke of, ii. 47, 73, 396.
Marlowe, Christopher, i. 177, 178, 235, ii. 248; his dramas, i. 237-244.
Marston, John, i. 269.
Martyr, Peter, i. 369.
Martyrs in the reign of Mary, i. 375-378.
Marvell, Andrew, ii. 29.
Masques, under James I., i. 149, 291.
Massillon, i. 373.
Massinger, Philip, ii. 235, 236, 249 *seq.*
Maundeville, Sir John, i. 75, 85.
May, Thomas, i. 398.
Medici, Lorenzo de, i. 153.
Melanchthon, Philip, i. 361, 369.
Merlin, i. 62.
Meung, Jean de, i. 76, 136.
Michelet, Jules, i. 4, 45; ii. 450.
Middleton, Thomas, i. 245.
Mill, John Stuart, ii. 270, 333, 477-517.
Milton, John, i. 49, 181, 207, 409-419; his prose writings, 419-433; his poetry, 433-456; ii. 106, 107, 406.
Molière, i. 179, 300, 302, 504 *seq.*; ii. 164, 359.
Mommsen, Theodor, i. 15.
Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, ii. 170, 197, 203.
Montesquieu, Ch., i. 16, 19.
Moore, Thomas, ii. 182, 250 *seq.*, 301.
More, Sir Thomas, i. 207, 232.
Müller, Max, ii. 479.
Muller, Ottfried, i. 5.
Murray, John, ii. 252, 301, 303.
Musset, Alfred de, i. 2, 168, 237, 272, 300; ii. 40, 222, 249, 259, 535 *seq.*

Nash, Thomas, i. 236.
Nayler, James, i. 391, 394, 397.
Neal's *History of the Puritans*, i. 394, 424.
Newcastle, Duchess of (Margaret Lucas), 503.
Newspaper, first daily, ii. 224.
Newton, Sir Isaac, ii. 58, 68.
Nicole, Peter, ii. 54.
Norman Conquest, the, i. 56, 57, 59; its effects on the national language and literature, 72 *seq.*, 102-104; ii. 314.
Normans, the, character of, i. 60; how they became French, 60; their taste and architecture, 61; their literature, chivalry, and success, 61-64; their position and tyranny in England, 71-73, ii. 314.
Nott, Dr. John, i. 161.
Novel, the English—its characteristics, i. 151 *seq.*; the modern school of novelists, ii. 337 *seq.*
Nut-brown Maid, the,—an ancient ballad, 160.

Oates, Titus, ii. 32.
Occam, William, i. 135.
Occleve, Thomas, i. 137.
Ochin, Bernard, i. 369.
Oliphant, Mrs., ii. 169.
Olivers, Thomas, ii. 60.
Orlay, Richard van, i. 144.
Orrery, Earl of, ii. 197.
Otway, Thomas, ii. 18, 24.
Ouseley, Sir William, ii. 251.
Overbury, Sir Thomas, 208.
Owen, John, 398.

Paganism of poetry and painting in Italy in the sixteenth century, i. 153 *seq.*
Paley, William, ii. 67.
Palgrave, Sir Francis, i. 25.
Parnell, Dr. Thomas, ii. 194.
Pascal, ii. 67, 149, 212, 433.
Pastoral poetry, i. 172.
Peele, George, i. 235.
Penn, William, ii. 58, 427.
Pepys, Samuel, i. 467, 468, 471.
Percy, Thomas, ii. 248.
Petrarch, i. 106, 156, 160.
Philips, Ambrose, ii. 194.
Philosophy and history, ii. 437 *seq.*
Philosophy and poetry, connection of, i. 132.
Picts, i. 29.
Pickering, Dr. Gilbert, ii. 3.
Piers Plowman's Crede, i. 102.
Piers Ploughman, Vision of, i. 100 *seq.*, 156.
Pitt, William, first Earl of Chatham, ii. 48, 75 *seq.*, 409.

Pitt, William (second son of the preceding), ii. 76, 81 *seq.*, 242.
Pleiad, the, i. 14.
Pluche, Abbé, ii. 101.
Poe, Edgar Allen, ii. 154.
Pope, Alexander, ii. 27, 90, 93, 133, 195-213, 279, 280, 284, 412 *seq.*
Prayer-book, English, i. 369-371.
Preaching at the Reformation period, i. 372.
Presbyterians and Independents in the sixteenth century, i. 391, 425.
Price, Dr. Richard, ii. 71, 84, 406.
Priestley, Dr., ii. 242.
Prior, Matthew, ii. 194, 213.
Proclus, i. 133.
Prynne, William, i. 398.
Pulci, an Italian painter, i. 154.
Pultock, Robert, ii. 180.
Purchas, Samuel, i. 207.
Puritans, the, i. 388 *seq.*, 459 *seq.*
Puttenham, George, i. 156, 207.
Pym, John, ii. 409.

Quarles, Francis, i. 203, 378.

Rabelais, i. 125, 187, 223, 306, 469; ii. 140, 180.
Racine, i. 311; ii. 3, 54, 363, 433.
Raleigh, Sir Walter, i. 180, 207, 230, 378.
Rapin, ii. 3.
Ray, John, ii. 69, 70.
Reformation in England made way for by the Saxon character and the situation of the Norman Church, i. 102-104, 139, 356 *seq.*
Reid, Thomas, ii. 71, 84, 182.
Renaissance, the English; manners of the time, i. 143-156; the theatre its original product, 222 *seq.*
Renan, Ernest, i. 15, 107.
Restoration, period of the, in England, i. 457 *seq.*, 521.
Revolution, period of the, in England, ii. 45 *seq.*
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, i. 530; ii. 83, 185.
Richard Cœur de Lion, i. 84.
Richardson, Samuel, i. 462; ii. 69, 159-169, 185, 198, 219.
Ridley, Nicholas, i. 375.
Ritson, Joseph, i. 90 *seq.*
Robert of Brunne, i. 76, 77.
Robert of Gloucester, i. 76.
Robertson, Dr. William, ii. 182, 193, 222, 471.
Robespierre, ii. 54.
Robin Hood ballads, i 90 *seq.*, 150, 156.
Rochester, Earl of (John Wilmot), i 469 *seq.*, 501; ii. 98, 214, 303.
Rogers, John, martyrdom of, i. 376.
Rogers, Samuel, ii. 280.
Roland, Song of, i. 62, 66 *seq.*
Rollo, a Norse leader, i. 60.
Ronsard, Peter de, i. 14.
Roscelin, i. 135.
Roscommon, Earl of, i. 501.
Roses, wars of the, i. 95, 104, 145, 242.
Rotheland, Hugh de, i. 73.
Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste, ii. 209.
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, ii. 188, 204, 218.
Royer-Collard, Pierre-Paul, ii. 504.
Rubens, i. 127, 149, 150, 195, 306; ii. 213.
Ruckert, ii. 249.
Russell, Lord William, i. 467.

Sacheverell, Dr., ii. 46, 72.
Sacy, Lemaistre de, i. 368.
Sadeler, i. 165.
Sainte-Beuve, i. 5.
Saintré, Jehan de, i. 85.
St. John. *See* Bolingbroke, Lord.
Saint-Simon, i. 2; ii. 362.
St. Theresa, i. 135.
Sand, George. *See* Dudevant, Madame
Savage, Richard, ii. 206.
Sawtré, William, i. 103.
Saxons, the, i. 23 *seq.*; characteristics of the race, 56; contrast with the Normans, 60; their endurance, 86 *seq.*; their invasion of England, ii. 313, 314.
Scaliger, ii. 466.
Schelling, i. 17.
Schiller, ii. 227, 249, 259.
Scotland in the seventeenth century, i. 461.
Scott, Sir Walter, i. 4, 209, ii. 2 *seq.*, 117 *seq.*, 182, 249, 274, 276, 396; his novels and poems, ii. 252-258.
Scotus, Duns, i. 133 *seq.*
Scudéry, Mademoiselle de, i. 164.
Sedley, Sir Charles, i. 202, 497, 498.
Selden, John, i. 207.
Seres, William, i. 389.
Settle, Elkanah, ii. 4, 17.
Sévigné, Madame de, ii. 203, 433.
Shadwell, Thomas, i. 479; ii. 17, 35.
Shaftesbury, Anthony Cooper, third Earl of, ii. 71.
Shakspeare, William, i. 157, 173, 207, 235, ii. 8, 15 *seq.*, 316; general idea of, i. 293-295; his life and character, 297-306; his style, 307-311, and manners, 311-316; his *dramatis personæ*, 316-320; his men of wit, 320-323; and

women, 323-327; his villains, 327, 328; the principal characters in his plays, 328-340; fancy, imagination —ideas of existence—love; harmony between the artist and his work, 340-351.
Sheffield, Lord, i. 157.
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, ii. 249, 265-269, 295.
Shenstone, William, ii. 221.
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, i. 524 *seq.*; ii. 76, 182.
Sherlock, Bishop, ii. 60, 68, 159.
Shirley, James, i. 236, 476.
Sidney, Algernon, i. 207, 409, 467.
Sidney, Sir Philip, i. 157, 164-172, 207, 224, 382; ii. 316.
Skelton, John, i. 139.
Smart, Christopher, ii. 221.
Smith, Adam, ii. 71, 84.
Smith, Sidney, ii. 53, 270.
Smollett, Tobias, ii. 74, 176-179, 182.
Society in Great Britain in the present day, ii. 328 *seq.*; in England and in France, 535 *seq.*
South, Dr. Robert, ii. 60, 63, 65-67.
Southern, Thomas, ii. 18.
Southey, Robert, ii. 180, 247, 250, 299, 418.
Speed, John, i. 207.
Spelman, Sir Henry, i. 207.
Spencer, Herbert, ii. 337.
Spenser, Edmund, i. 157, 174, 179, 207, 409, 442; his life, character, and poetry, 180-200; ii. 14, 316, 530.
Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn, ii. 270, 457.
Steele, Sir Richard, ii. 76, 90, 396.
Stendhal, Count de, i. 19, 60, 119.
Sterling, John, ii. 438 *seq.*
Sterne, Laurence, ii. 179-182, 219.
Stewart, Dugald, ii. 84, 182, 238.
Stillingfleet, Bishop, ii. 60, 68.
Stowe, John, i. 207.
Strafford, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of, ii. 409 *seq.*
Strafford, William, i. 145.
Strype, John, i. 225.
Stubbes, John, i. 143, 151.
Suckling, Sir John, i. 201, 498.
Sue, Eugène, ii. 364.
Surrey, Henry Howard, Earl of, i. 156-161, 363.
Swift, Jonathan, i. 462; ii. 4, 69, 70, 76, 89 *seq.*, 396, 419; sketch of his life, 117-123; his wit, 123-126; his pamphlets, 126-132; his poetry, 132-140; his philosophy, etc., 140-150.

Taillefer, i. 63, 73.
Tasso, i. 187, 193.
Taylor, Jeremy, i. 208, 379, 382-387.
Temple, Sir William, i. 492; ii. 121, 140, 193, 406.
Teniers, David, ii. 256.
Tennyson, Alfred, ii. 270, 337, 518-541.
Thackeray, William M., ii. 258, 270; his novels, 367-401.
Theatre, the, in the sixteenth century, i. 223; after the Restoration, 476, 477, 504 *seq.*, ii. 5 *seq.*
Theresa, St., i. 135.
Thibaut of Champagne, i. 69.
Thierry, Augustin, i. 4, 26, 44, 72; ii. 433.
Thiers, Louis Adolphe, ii. 414, 433.
Thomson, James, ii. 217-219.
Thorpe, John, i. 37, 43.
Tickell, Thomas, ii. 194.
Tillotson, Archbishop, ii. 60 *seq.*
Tindal, Matthew, ii. 69.
Titian, i. 199, 306.
Tocqueville, Alexis de, i. 15.
Toland, John, ii. 69.
Toleration Act, the, ii. 427, 428.
Tomkins, Thomas, i. 377.
Townley, James, i. 530.
Turner, Sharon, i. 37, 42 *seq.*
Tutchin, John, ii. 206.
Tyndale, William, i. 366 *seq.*, 373, 389.

Urfé, Honoré d', i. 166, 264.
Usher, James, i. 207.

Vanbrugh, Sir John, i. 503-522.
Vane, Sir Harry, i. 468.
Vega, Lope de, i. 135, 234, 478.
Village feasts of sixteenth century described, i. 150, 151.
Villehardouin, a French chronicler, i. 68, 85.
Vinci, Leonardo da, i. 13.
Voltaire, i. 11; ii. 188, 209, 300, 466
Vos, Martin de, i. 165.

Wace, Robert, i. 61, 63 *seq.*, 73.
Waller, Edmund, i. 202, 409, 476, 498-501; ii. 193.
Walpole, Horace, ii. 203.
Walpole, Sir Robert, ii. 46, 51.
Walton, Isaac, i. 208.
Warburton, Bishop, ii. 69.
Warner, William, i. 178.
Warton, Thomas, i. 57, 72, 78, 135; ii. 248.
Watt, James, ii. 84.
Watteau, Anthony, ii. 203.
Watts, Isaac, ii. 221.
Webster, John, 245, 250 *seq.*; ii. 24
Wesley, John, ii. 58-60.

Wetherell, Elizabeth, ii. 335.
Wharton, Lord, ii. 212.
Whitfield, George, ii. 58-60.
Wiclif, John, i. 102, 103, 241, 362.
Wilkes, John, ii. 75.
William III., i. 493; ii. 315.
Wither, George, i. 379.
William of Malmesbury, i. 61.
William the Conqueror, i. 63 *seq.*
Windham, William, ii. 76.
Witenagemote, the, i. 36.
Wollaston, William Hyde, ii. 406.
Wolsey, Cardinal, i. 139, 363.
Wordsworth, William, ii. 248, 260-265.
Wortley, Lady Mary. *See* Montagu.
Wyatt, Sir Thomas, i. 156, 157.
Wycherley, William, i. 14, 480-485, 496, 503, 504, 515; ii. 26, 98.

Yonge, Charlotte Mary, ii. 325.
Young, Arthur, ii. 84.
Young, Edward, ii. 231.

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